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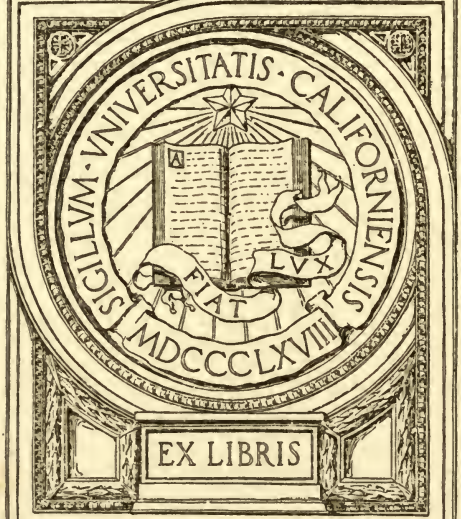
"We are Seven"

(Stage Version)

By Eleanor Gates

GIFT OF
Class of 1902



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"WE ARE SEVEN"

A THREE-ACT WHIMSICAL FARCE

By

ELEANOR GATES

AUTHOR OF "THE POOR LITTLE RICH GIRL," "SWAT THE FLY!" "THE BIOGRAPHY OF A PRAIRIE GIRL," "THE PLOW-WOMAN," ETC.

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Class A 1962

AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED
TO ALL *DIANTHAS*—AND TO
THEIR DREAMS!

313136

FOREWORD

One of the staple jokes of the day is to the effect that everyone is writing plays. Happily, it is true that never in the history of the world—so far as we can judge—have so many people tried their hand at drama-making. This bodes well for the future of the domestic play output.

The human animal is, above everything else, dramatic. Who has not seen a tiny baby, by its tearless weeping, stir a whole household to action? And the first instinct of the toddling child seems to lean toward "pretending." Is not a desire to write plays the natural development of our very earliest tendencies?

Playwrights who are established, as well as those who have had only lesser success, are frequently appealed to by ambitious beginners. Often these appeals are for collaboration; more often they are for advice in the preparation of a script. "I can manage my dialogue," writes one aspirant, from a far-Western hamlet; "but please send me two or three typed pages—so that I can see how to describe my scenes, and put in my directions. Also shall I make drawings for my play?"

I do not say that the typewritten script of "We Are Seven" is technically faultless. It is sufficiently correct, however, to be acceptable to any director. And—except that the leaves of this volume are printed on both sides; that the printed letter takes the place of the typed; and that, naturally enough, no explanation of abbreviations is ever furnished a director—this book is an exact copy of the "working" script of the play. The farce had its metropolitan premiere at Maxine Elliott's Theatre; it is now being given in "stock" in different cities of the United States and Canada. And this "working" script is being sent the Stock Managers for their productions.

I hope, therefore, that the play in the form here presented will be of some slight assistance to a few, at least, of the many who are in doubt over the preparation of their typewritten work.

ELEANOR GATES.

New York, April 8th, 1915.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

PETER AVERY
COLONEL AVERY
DIANTHA KERR
MISS LAVINIA CONNAUGHTON
DR. FANNY GRANT
SAMUEL LAWRENCE
PHILIP MARTIN
HENRY BOOTH
THADDEUS MORRISON
FETTER
HANS
HARRIET
DEVOL
PERCY DEVOL
LIEUT. SHEEHAN
PATROLMAN HAYES
PATROLMAN KEITH
INTERPRETER FARLEY
THE BOOTBLACK
THE NEWSBOY
THE TAGGER

THREE EXTRA GIRLS, ONE EXTRA BOY

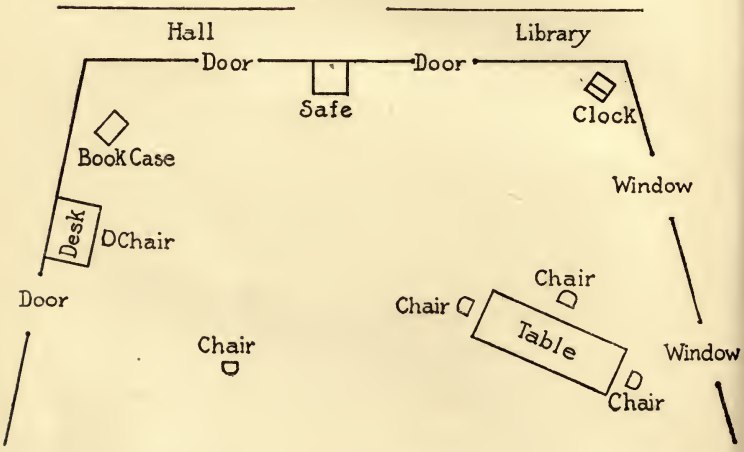
SYNOPSIS

ACT I—LAW OFFICES OF LAWRENCE & AVERY
ACT II—LIBRARY AT MISS CONNAUGHTON'S
ACT III—MERCER STREET POLICE STATION

PLACE, NEW YORK
TIME, THE PRESENT

ACT I

DIAGRAM OF SET



*ABBREVIATIONS:

X—To cross.
C—Center.
R—Right.
L—Left.
L C—Left center.
R C—Right center.
U R C—Up right center.
U L C—Up left center.
R 1 E—Right first entrance.
R 2 E—Right second entrance (door as drawn).
R 3 E—Right third entrance.
L 1 E—Left first entrance.
L 2 E—Left second entrance.
L 3 E—Left third entrance.

All these abbreviations are not used in this play

ACT I

The set is a reception-room at the offices of Lawrence & Avery, Attorneys-at-law, and suggests the occupancy of an old soldier.

There is a solid door at -R-2-E-, a second solid door - U-R-C-, leading into the hall, and a third door -U-L-C-, leading into the library. All doors have transoms. When the door - U-L-C- is open, shelves of law books can be seen. There are two windows in the -L- flat, through which can be seen the tops of tall buildings. The office is handsomely furnished, but the furniture is of the period of twenty-five years ago.

Down -L- is a large, flat desk; there is a chair behind it, and other chairs are set at either end. On the desk is a telephone. Set against the -R- wall of the room, on the up-stage side of the door, is a second desk, with a chair in front of it; another chair is down -R-C-.

Up-stage from the desk -R- is an old-fashioned, revolving book-case. Up -C- against the wall, between the doors -R-C- and -L-C-, is a small office safe. Up -L-, between a window and the library door, is an old-fashioned grandfather's clock. A rug covers the floor, and on the walls are pictures of Lincoln and Grant; also an etching showing a battle, and a diploma in a heavy frame

At rise, Peter Avery is discovered walking to and fro nervously. He is about 25 years of age.

Philip Martin enters - U-R-C- with a wire basket filled with opened correspondence. He goes to back of desk down -L-C-.

PHILIP

Hello, Peter!

PETER

Oh, hello, Phil!

PHILIP

I suppose you're framing up some NEW stunt this lovely morning.

PETER

I am NOT!

PHILIP

O-o-oh! I just thought you seemed to be in one of your imaginative moods.

(*Xes -C-.*)

PETER

There you've got it! Imaginative moods! Phil, when I grind ahead like the rest of you fellows, I'm bored to death. And when I let myself go —

PHILIP

You get us all into trouble!

PETER

Oh, I know it! And I've made up my mind.

PHILIP

To what?

PETER

I don't belong in a law office.

PHILIP

Well, it's no place for flights of fancy.

PETER

(*Assents.*)

So I'm going to leave.

PHILIP

LEAVE?

PETER

And do something else!

PHILIP

What — for instance?

PETER

I haven't decided yet — but, I —

PHILIP

Now, Peter, go slow! Remember that you're in a nice mess right this minute over your LAST inspiration.

(*Sam enters up -L-C-. He has three law books. Slips are interleaved occasionally to which he refers during the following scene. He is back of desk -L-C-.*)

PETER

Oh, call it by its right name, Phil. Inspiration! It was a low, practical joke!

PHILIP

Hello, Sam!

(*Sam and Phil exchange looks. Phil goes -R-; bus. with books.*)

SAM

Peter Avery, you seem to be talking like a common, ordinary human being this morning.

PETER

(*Down -L-.*)

Well, Sam! *I* know what I've done. This is the worst joke I've ever slipped over — the most caddish — the most contemptible —

SAM

Oh, now, Peter, — !

PETER

It is, Sam! The idea of sending a woman physician on a wild-goose chase!

SAM

Do you know Dr. Fanny Grant?

PETER

No, but I've heard a lot about her. I heard she was a stunner for looks, and a corking doctor. But that she hates men.

SAM

I guess she does — NOW!

PETER

Well, that's what started me! Here's a chance, I said to myself, to have some fun with Henry and Phil and Thad and — and you.

SAM

So you telephoned her to make a sick call on each one of us!

PETER

And I thought it was funny!

SAM

That's the curious psychology of the practical joke!

PETER

When you first think of them, they seem so DAMNED funny!

SAM

What did you tell her was the matter with me?

PETER

I just sent word that you were — suffering.

SAM

Well, she charged me a suffering price.

PETER

CHARGED!

SAM

I dropped ten dollars to her over the bannisters!

PETER

Ten!

(*Pays.*)

(*Thad enters - U-R-C- and goes to door -R-.*)

SAM

This squares you!

PETER

Thad!

THAD

Oh, hello, Peter!

PETER

(*Xes to Thad.*)

Thad, —

THAD

Well?

PETER

How much did the Doctor charge YOU?

THAD

I handed her five dollars through a crack in the door.

PETER

Five!

(*Pays Thad.*)

THAD

Thanks!

(*Exits -R-.*)

PETER

Thank YOU!

SAM

(*Xing -C-.*)

Well, it's lucky for you, Peter, that Thad and I paid.

PETER

(*Startled; follows Sam.*)

What d'ye mean, lucky?

SAM

Well, you sent in fake calls for a physician, didn't you?

PETER

Yes, what about it?

PHILIP

(*Xing -D-R- of Peter.*)

Disorderly conduct, isn't it, Sam?

SAM

It is, if you don't pay.

PETER

Disorderly conduct!

PHILIP

(*To Sam.*)

How about Henry? Did HE pay?

PETER

I hope so!

PHILIP

Wait a minute! I'll see!

(*Calls through door -R-.*)

Henry! Henry!

(*Henry enters at -R-.*)

SAM

Henry, did you pay the Doctor?

HENRY

No, I didn't have any money.

SAM

Fine, or imprisonment, or both!

PHILIP

Phew!

PETER

Henry!

(*Takes him by the arm.*)

She didn't motor all the way to Yonkers?

HENRY

She certainly did!

PETER

I forgot you lived so far out!

HENRY

She arrived at two o'clock this morning.

SAM

Two o'clock!

HENRY

Women doctors seem to have no sense of the conventions!

PETER

Oh, don't say that! Oh! I never dreamed she made visits so late! That's terrible! Oh, two o'clock, and Yonkers!

(*Drops into chair -R-C-.*)

HENRY

(*To Peter.*)

What did you do it for?

PHILIP

Don't kick! — a person who lives in Yonkers ought to be glad to have someone drop in on him occasionally.

HENRY

Not at forty dollars a drop!

SAM—PHILIP—PETER

(*In chorus.*)

WHAT?

(*Sam rushes up to safe, kneels, works combination. Peter rises, watches him fearsomely.*)

PHILIP

She taxed you forty?

HENRY

(*Nods.*)

And I didn't even see her.

(*Peter Xes -L-, halts; looks at floor.*)

PHILIP

We've got to pay that forty or you'll be arrested!

(*Peter makes helpless gesture.*)

SAM

(*Without turning.*)

Boys!

(*Philip and Henry rush to him.*)

It — won't — open!

(*Peter faces front, rigid with guilt and apprehension. Sam, Philip and Henry turn upon him. Sam points accusing finger.*)

Peter — Avery!

(*Sam, Philip and Henry march down, halt in line, -R- of Peter.*)

PETER

(*Nods.*)

I changed the combination!

SAM

(*Sorrowfully.*)

Peter! This practical joking of yours is a malady!

HENRY

And it's chronic!

PHILIP

Where's the NEW combination?

PETER

(*As he goes through all his pockets hastily.*)

I wrote it down !

(*Remembers.*)

On the library table — at Uncle's.

SAM

(*To Henry.*)

Go after it — quick !

HENRY

(*Holds back.*)

But, Sam, why can't PETER — ?

SAM

Rush ! Rush !

(*Henry exits -R-.*)

(*To Peter.*)

And you'd better lay low for a couple of days, or that Docto will nail you !

PETER

I wish she would ! I deserve it ! Yes, I do ! I hope she arrest me and locks me up ! It'd teach me a lesson, and that's wha I need !

SAM

Well, you certainly do need a lesson.

PHILIP

Yes, we don't want to lose you —

SAM

No, we want to cure you. That's it, we want to cure you !

(*Exits -R-.*)

PHILIP

Well, you've treated me fine, haven't you? Left me out — and I'd ENJOY a call from a good-looking Doctorine!

(*Goes to bookcase.*)

(*Telephone rings.*)

PETER

(*Goes to desk -L-, takes receiver.*)

Hello! Hello! Who?

(*Startled.*)

Is she a tall woman — with a little satchel?

(*Relieved.*)

Oh!

(*To Philip.*)

Two ladies and a gentleman to see Mr. Lawrence, Senior. Miss Lavinia Connaughton, Miss Kerr and Mr. Devol. Ask them to wait, Phil.

(*Philip exits - U-R-C-, leaves door open.*)

(*Peter closes door after Philip, closes transom over door -R-; into phone.*)

Six, six, six River. Hello — hello!

(*Waits nervously.*)

Hello — hello! Please take this message. Tell Dr. Grant that Mr. Philip Martin is better — understand? He's MUCH better, and he won't need her, so don't let her come. Well, what IS your number? Six, six, six BRYANT! Central! Central! Oh, never mind!

(*Closes phone, starts -R-.*)

(*Colonel Avery enters - U-L-C-. He is past middle age: of the old-school type; military. Philip follows with card in his hand. Colonel is changing his street glasses for reading glasses.*)

COLONEL

(*Down -C-.*)

Good morning, Peter,— good morning !

PETER

(*Embarrassed.*)

Good morning, Uncle !

(*Pause; bursts out.*)

Oh, I want to tell you that I'm ashamed.

COLONEL

I'm glad to hear it, sir.

PETER

Uncle, I've played my last practical joke !

COLONEL

You've said that a good many times. sir.

PETER

And I always mean it. And I'm sorry.

COLONEL

What good does being sorry do? Find the lady, and make your apology.

(*Reaches for card.*)

(*Peter starts - U-L-, catches sight of safe, halts, sidles through door - U-L-C-.*)

Did you say someone wanted to see me?

PHILIP

Well, they DID want to see Mr. Lawrence —

COLONEL

(*Surprised.*)

Well! Well! Miss Lavinia Connaughton!

(*Hands card to Philip and goes -L-.*)

PHILIP

(*Puzzled.*)

Shall I ask them to call again?

COLONEL

Did you tell them that Mr. Lawrence is out of town?

PHILIP

No, sir, but I will!

(*Starts - U-R-.*)

COLONEL

No, no. I should like to see her. Ask them in here.

(*Pauses, goes -L-, undecided; shows subdued excitement; exits - U-L-C-.*)

(*Philip bows, exits - U-R-C-.*)

DIANTHA

(*Off stage - U-R-.*)

Keep your distance, I say! Keep your distance!

DEVOL

(*Off stage.*)

You FORCE me to be rude!

(*Diantha backs in - U-R-C-. She is dainty, pretty, and about twenty; modishly gowned. In her right hand she carries a closed parasol, with which she jabs at Devol, who follows her, making motions of shooing her in. Devol is middle aged, dapper; wears cutaway; carries silk hat.*)

DIANTHA

You'll be sorry if I poke your eye out!

DEVOL

This is a most unpleasant duty!

(Auntie follows Devol, comes -C-. She is in her forties, attractive, richly dressed, but with old-fashioned touches in bonnet and gown. Philip enters behind her. Diantha goes -R-C-, stands pouting. Devol halts between her and the door; keeps an eye on her. Philip follows Auntie down.)

PHILIP

(To Auntie.)

Colonel Avery will see you.

AUNTIE

Colonel Avery?

PHILIP

Mr. Lawrence and Colonel Avery are now associated.

AUNTIE

Colonel ROBERT Avery?

PHILIP

Yes, Madam.

(Exits - U-L-C-.)

AUNTIE

Well! Well!

(Goes -L-.)

(Diantha sits -R-C-. Auntie sits -R- of desk -L-.)

DEVOL

(To Auntie.)

Then you shan't be able to see Mr. Lawrence?

DIANTHA

I'm glad of it! We'll get an unbiased opinion from a stranger!

DEVOL

(*To Auntie. Lowers voice.*)

Shall you need MY further assistance?

(*Glances at Diantha.*)

AUNTIE

(*Arranges skirts.*)

I can handle the situation!

DEVOL

Then, may I suggest —?

DIANTHA

You'd better toddle along.

AUNTIE

Diantha!

DEVOL

(*To Auntie.*)

May I suggest that I secure for you the list of people made homeless by that fire?

AUNTIE

Very well, — and especially the names of the women.

DIANTHA

And the babies!

AUNTIE

Oh, the babies, of course.

DEVOL

The mothers are probably out on the sidewalk this moment, seated on the few things they saved from the flames!

AUNTIE

Oh, poor souls!

DEVOL

Would you like me to take a — er — small sum with me for them?

AUNTIE

Of course!

(*Opens purse, hands him roll of bills.*)

Here! This is for food and beds. When they're comfortable, investigate the neediest cases.

DEVOL

Ah! Miss Connaughton, what a generous soul you are, and what a pleasure it is to serve you in this humane capacity!

(*Pockets money, exits up -R-C- hastily.*)

DIANTHA

Oh, how mortifying to have to come here!

AUNTIE

I'm sorry you feel that way about it.

DIANTHA

Colonel Avery, whoever he is, will tell you that a college graduate is old enough to go about this town by herself.

AUNTIE

Like other young women, college graduates need protection.

DIANTHA

Oh, what WILL he think when he hears what you've come for!

AUNTIE

He will think it highly advisable.

DIANTHA

For a woman who's getting material for a thesis?

AUNTIE

(*Lowers voice.*)

Diantha, I wouldn't feel as I do if it weren't for your shocking ideas. BUT—you CANNOT go about alone!

DIANTHA

(*Rises.*)

Shocking ideas!

(*Spiritedly. Comes -C-.*)

As if anything that means progress for the human race can be in the SLIGHTEST degree improper.

AUNTIE

Why should YOU worry about the human race?

DIANTHA

But what is EVERY young girl preparing for?

AUNTIE

For a marriage with some good man.

DIANTHA

Marriage? Do you mean a marriage that takes no account of possible —

AUNTIE

Diantha!

(*Pause.*)

In my youth a nice girl didn't even THINK about such things before she was married.

DIANTHA

A-a-ah! That's ANOTHER reason why we haven't finer citizens today. Suppose all women followed YOUR line of conduct, and didn't marry?

AUNTIE

Diantha! That's unkind!

DIANTHA

Oh, I beg your pardon.

AUNTIE

And please don't refer to my spinsterhood before — Colonel Avery!

DIANTHA

Why not?

(*Auntie makes warning gesture.*)

(*Col. Avery enters - U-L-C-; both he and Auntie are embarrassed. Auntie rises.*)

COLONEL

(*Bows.*)

Er — Miss Connaughton!

AUNTIE

Colonel Avery —

(*Bows.*)

My niece, Miss Kerr.

(*Diantha bows.*)

COLONEL

How do you do, Miss Kerr!

(*To both.*)

Please don't stand!

(*Auntie sits -R- of desk -L-. Diantha at -R-; and Colonel above desk at -L-. There is an awkward pause.*)

I regret that Mr. Lawrence is not here; that is — I'm sorry you are disappointed by his absence.

AUNTIE

What we wished to get from Mr. Lawrence was a little advice —

DIANTHA

Not I, Auntie, — YOU!

COLONEL

And the nature of that advice?

AUNTIE

To be as brief as possible, then: This child —

DIANTHA

(*To Colonel.*)

Please note that, from my Aunt's viewpoint, I am still a juvenile.

(*Xes, during speech, to chair -L- of desk at -L-.*)

(*Colonel bows.*)

AUNTIE

Diantha is making a study of —

DIANTHA

(*Proudly.*)

Sociology!

AUNTIE

A study that takes her into places where a LADY should not be seen alone.

COLONEL

You don't accompany her?

AUNTIE

I could never keep up with her.

COLONEL

Well, Mr. Devol —?

AUNTIE

Mr. Devol is too busy with my secretarial work—and other matters.

DIANTHA

(*To Colonel; astonished.*)

Oh! Do you know Mr. Devol?

COLONEL

(*Embarrassed.*)

I met him years ago at Miss Connaughton's.

DIANTHA

Why, I thought you and Auntie were strangers!

COLONEL

(*Exchanges look with Auntie.*)

Oh, no!

AUNTIE

Not quite!

DIANTHA

Well, where have you BEEN all these years?

(*Auntie and Colonel are greatly embarrassed.*)

Oh, I see. And you didn't know you were going to meet here today?

AUNTIE

No!

COLONEL

Oh, no!

DIANTHA

How interesting! How romantic! And you were friends when you were both —

AUNTIE

Diantha! We're taking Colonel Avery's valuable time.

DIANTHA

Yes, Auntie!

(*To Colonel.*)

Now that I look at you, your face DOES seem familiar. As if I'd seen your photograph, or —

AUNTIE

You're mistaken!

COLONEL

(*To Auntie.*)

You were saying — ?

AUNTIE

Day after day this girl, wholly unattended, goes into the most barbarous parts of the city, where the streets fairly teem with — with foreign humans!

DIANTHA

Auntie doesn't realize that a girl meets with every courtesy on the East Side!

COLONEL

The East Side?

DIANTHA

(*Nods.*)

You see, I'm working on a thesis for my Masters Degree.

AUNTIE

Masters Degree! One day it's the Cigar Makers' Union. The next, it's an assemblage of shirtwaist workers. Or she goes inspecting horrid tenements!

DIANTHA

(*To Colonel; enthusiastically.*)

Social phenomena, in all their various phases, interest me intensely. I am especially allured —

(*Auntie starts.*)

by the deductive and predictive stages of the science.

(*Auntie sinks back relieved.*)

COLONEL

And what, may I ask, is the subject of your thesis?

DIANTHA

(*Declamatory.*)

Realizing that culture has remained backward in those things which are decisive for the formation of a new and higher race,—

(*Auntie again leans forward apprehensively.*)

I wanted in the beginning to write on the Identicalness of Love and Eugen —

AUNTIE

Just a moment !

DIANTHA

(*Resignedly.*)

I was forced to abandon that subject and choose another. It is —

(*Gesture.*)

The Influence of Alien Immigration upon the Metropolitan Body Politic.

COLONEL

Rather a large order !

AUNTIE

I'm glad you look at it that way. To me, this thesis business seems nothing but — but — er — well —

DIANTHA

Say it, Auntie ! Say it !

AUNTIE

Well, then, dear, an excuse for madcap gadding.

DIANTHA

Dear Auntie, you didn't have a University training, so I QUITE understand your lack of interest in academic subjects.

AUNTIE

They give me the shivers !

DIANTHA

But I think your interference with my personal research is — is — the limit !

AUNTIE

Diantha !

COLONEL

(*Hastily.*)

Miss Connaughton, how can *I* help with this — thesis?

AUNTIE

Each day, as I sit at home, I'm fairly tormented with concern for her safety. So I have determined upon a step. Colonel Avery, I want you to find a suitable person to act as her escort.

COLONEL

An escort?

DIANTHA

I don't have fainting fits: I don't make friends with strangers —

AUNTIE

A hired escort.

COLONEL

(*To Diantha; gallantly.*)

Gentleman-in-waiting to the Princess.

DIANTHA

An attendant for the lunatic!

AUNTIE

(*To Colonel; significantly.*)

I want a thoroughly reliable man.

DIANTHA

Auntie wants a nice little tattletale, to listen and report. A sort of pink-tea Pinkerton!

AUNTIE

You may call him what you wish!

DIANTHA

I'm glad of that!

AUNTIE

Do you know of anyone whom you could recommend?

COLONEL

Well, may I ask the requirements?

DIANTHA

Yes. He should be tall, well built, athletic —

AUNTIE

Now, Diantha!

DIANTHA

But if he's going to protect me —

COLONEL

(*Exchanges look with Auntie; they nod in agreement. He jots down notes.*)

Escort for Diantha Kerr. Description: Tall, well built, athletic — Yes?

AUNTIE

Well bred, and respectable.

(*Colonel writes.*)

DIANTHA

And young, of course.

AUNTIE

(*To Colonel.*)

Middle-aged will do.

DIANTHA

He's got to keep up with me.

COLONEL

(*Pointedly. To Auntie.*)

Somebody quick on his feet!

AUNTIE

Young!

(*Colonel writes.*)

DIANTHA

And smart in appearance.

AUNTIE

(*To Colonel.*)

He need only be presentable.

DIANTHA

He'd better be smart. The East Side is quick to notice the difference between real and sham people. And the little children, the darlings! have a most embarrassing way of throwing valueless etceteras!

COLONEL

Etceteras?

DIANTHA

Junk!

AUNTIE

(*Horrified whisper.*)

Junk!

COLONEL

(*Writes.*)

Smart in appearance.

DIANTHA

I shan't bother to stipulate the color of his hair —

AUNTIE

I should hope not!

DIANTHA

But he MUST have brown eyes.

AUNTIE

Nonsense!

COLONEL

The idea being — ?

DIANTHA

Blue-eyed people have initiative; and this sleuth need have no ideas of his own.

COLONEL

(*Writes.*)

I think I have it all.

(*Reads.*)

Tall, well built, athletic, well-bred, respectable, young, smart in appearance, blue eyes —

DIANTHA

BROWN eyes!

COLONEL

Oh, yes, — brown eyes.

DIANTHA

May I ask one question?

AUNTIE

Certainly, dear.

DIANTHA

Will this ESCORT be hanging around when I'm NOT going out?

AUNTIE

Can't he sit in the library?

DIANTHA

He'll hear me practice my songs.

AUNTIE

Oh, he mustn't hear those songs !

(*Rises.*)

(*Colonel is puzzled.*)

DIANTHA

You see, Colonel Avery, holding, as I do, to the theory that a girl's life is ESSENTIALLY a preparation for —

AUNTIE

That will do !

DIANTHA

(*To Auntie.*)

And what about my sewing-basket ?

COLONEL

Anything wrong with your sewing-basket ?

DIANTHA

Wrong ! Why, in the old days, Colonel Avery, didn't every girl get her wedding-chest ready — with house linen, and things to wear ?

(*Colonel nods.*)

Well, I've gone only a step further. I'm making —

AUNTIE

Oh, PLEASE !

(*Sits.*)

COLONEL

There's something here that I don't understand.

AUNTIE

Because it's of such a nature that — that —

DIANTHA

Why, Auntie, Colonel Avery would APPROVE of my plans.

COLONEL

And what ARE your plans?

DIANTHA

Why, you see, I'm simply —

AUNTIE

(*To Diantha.*)

PLEASE!!

COLONEL

But if I'm to act in this matter, I should have the facts.

AUNTIE

Colonel Avery, you don't know what you're asking!

DIANTHA

Well, you SHALL have the facts. You see, it's this way:

AUNTIE

No! No!

DIANTHA

Then you, Auntie!

AUNTIE

Oh, but you'll embarrass me with your interruptions!

DIANTHA

(*Rising.*)

I'll leave the room.

AUNTIE

(*Rises.*)

Oh, no !

(*Colonel rises embarrassed.*)

DIANTHA

That's best. You're old friends, and you can tell it to Colone Avery in your own way.

(*To Colonel.*)

Please put me somewhere.

COLONEL

Yes, in here !

(*Opens door -R-.*)

DIANTHA

(*At door. To Colonel.*)

You know, your face is so familiar — !

(*Exits -R-.*)

(*Colonel closes door. Auntie sits.*)

COLONEL

It seems strange to think of her as that little baby I used to hold.

AUNTIE

She was good — as a baby !

COLONEL

And you've been aunt and mother to her.

(*Sits -R-.*)

AUNTIE

(*Nods.*)

Since poor Sister put her into my arms, it's been a responsibility; with no one to advise me.

COLONEL

(*Steals a glance at her.*)

Well, I hope I can be of assistance.

AUNTIE

I — I hardly know how to begin.

COLONEL

Please feel that you can be quite frank.

AUNTIE

Oh, dear! It was bad enough when young women took up suffrage. But — there are worse things than suffrage!

COLONEL

Miss Kerr doesn't seem to be interested in frivolous subjects.

(*In Diantha's manner.*)

The Metropolitan Body Politic!

AUNTIE

I almost wish she were. It's this sociology that's at the bottom of the whole thing. Or I should say —

(*Voice drops significantly.*)

a certain DEPARTMENT of sociology!

COLONEL

(*Puzzled.*)

A department?

AUNTIE

Well, — she should have been named EUGENIA !

COLONEL

(*Comprehends.*)

O — oh !

AUNTIE

She goes into the East Side OSTENSIBLY for this thesis business. But —

(*Protestingly.*)

I don't think it's nice for a YOUNG lady to be chairman of the Perfect Baby Committee !

COLONEL

M-m !

AUNTIE

But that Committee isn't half. She — she — talks to the East Side women about — about — Oh, I don't know just how to put it.

COLONEL

She spoke of her plans.

AUNTIE

She meant FAMILY plans. Diantha has made up her mind to have seven children.

COLONEL

God help us !

AUNTIE

And she isn't even engaged !

COLONEL

The NUMBER is a little old-fashioned.

AUNTIE

Old-fashioned! Wait! She thinks of those seven, and SPEAKS of them, — AS IF THEY WERE ALREADY BORN!

(*Pause.*)

COLONEL

I advise marriage.

AUNTIE

There's the difficulty! Every time a man proposes to her, what do you think she says?

(*Colonel shakes head.*)

"Peter wouldn't like THAT man for a father!"

COLONEL

Peter?

AUNTIE

Her eldest son!

COLONEL

She has NAMED them?

AUNTIE

(*Counts on her fingers.*)

Peter — Diantha — William — Thomas — Phoebe — Frederick — Hope!

COLONEL

I realize the importance of your visit!

AUNTIE

She drew upon members of the Connaughton and Kerr families for the names of her — her brood!

COLONEL

In a way that was natural.

AUNTIE

Two of her sons are christened after her dear conservative grandfathers; two others after paternal uncles. The eldest girl is Diantha, after herself, of course. Another is called Phoebe —

COLONEL

Your cousin Phoebe?

AUNTIE

(*Helpless gesture.*)

That gentle refined soul! And the BABY'S second name —

(*Points to herself.*)

Is Lavinia!

COLONEL

(*Again steals look.*)

Lavinia!

AUNTIE

And to think Diantha is my own sister's child!

COLONEL

(*Rises, goes to door -R-, shakes finger at door.*)

Young lady, you must have an escort!

AUNTIE

But not handsome!

COLONEL

I understand!

(*Opens door and bows.*)

(*Diantha enters, comes -C-. Her manner is a little shy. She looks appealingly from Colonel to Auntie, and back again.*)

DIANTHA

I suppose Auntie has told you — ?

COLONEL

Everything !

DIANTHA

I don't feel that I need apologize for myself. I am the new type of young woman. I am out against ignorance and prudery. In every nation, consideration for the race is paramount. I'm in the fight for a better race !

AUNTIE

Diantha, I blush for you !

DIANTHA

Because I realize that young people should look forward to parenthood? Why, the desire for children will hardly move in their hearts after marriage, if it doesn't before !

AUNTIE

Before MARRIAGE?

DIANTHA

Is there anything WRONG about motherhood?

AUNTIE

No, — of course.

DIANTHA

Well, is there anything WRONG about FATHERHOOD?

AUNTIE

Oh, please hush !

DIANTHA

(*To Colonel. Declamatory.*)

EDUCATION is what we need. Here we spend millions each year to train soldiers how to kill. But what do we spend to teach girls their future —

AUNTIE

Diantha!

DIANTHA

Well, marriage is CHIEFLY concerned with the rearing of children! As for me, I recognize my mission as a future mother! I am unashamed!

AUNTIE

(*Rises.*)

Just the same, if these ideas of yours get noised about, your set will drop you!

DIANTHA

Drop me, Auntie, dear! I've already dropped THEM! They'd approve of me if I went to fox trots, or spent my time petting a poodle. But babies? Shame!

COLONEL

Of course, that's true!

DIANTHA

Oh! You share my views!

(*To Auntie.*)

You see how sympathetic people are —

(*Looks at Colonel.*)

when they have babies of their own?

(*Auntie starts.*)

COLONEL

(*In consternation.*)

I — I'm a bachelor.

(*Auntie is secretly pleased.*)

DIANTHA

Oh! No wife. And no kiddies! That's too bad! A man misses so much, don't you think? And so does a woman. Now, take Auntie, for —

AUNTIE

(*Horrified.*)

My dear!

DIANTHA

Colonel Avery should see how good you are to hundreds of little children.

AUNTIE

It is my duty.

DIANTHA

(*To Colonel.*)

Yes, duty! Why, from one year's end to the other, Auntie keeps that Mr. Devol on the go, searching out the deserving poor. Ah, what a wife Auntie would've made, and what a mother —

AUNTIE

Let us return to the question of the escort.

COLONEL

By all means, yes.

(*Xes back of Diantha to desk -L-; sits.*)

DIANTHA

(*Sils at -R-.*)

You still insist?

AUNTIE

I do!

COLONEL

It certainly seems advisable.

DIANTHA

Well, I've been thinking it over in there, and I've made up my mind. If I MUST have an escort, it will be only under ONE condition.

COLONEL

And that is?

DIANTHA

He must be deaf and dumb!

AUNTIE

Deaf and dumb!

COLONEL

Deaf and dumb!

DIANTHA

Deaf and dumb.

AUNTIE

I won't listen to it! How could a deaf and dumb escort know when some low wretch speaks to you?

DIANTHA

No low wretch ever does.

AUNTIE

How could a deaf man protect you from the street cars and — and similar vehicles?

DIANTHA

I WON'T have some man chattering into my ears all the time, and listening to what I say!

AUNTIE

But the newspapers would get hold of it!

DIANTHA

(*Rises.*)

Auntie lives in daily horror of having the proud name of Connaughton dragged into the vulgar press. And this time it will be, — you bet!

(*Goes up stage and turns.*)

AUNTIE

You NEVER hear such expressions at home!

DIANTHA

I can just SEE the headlines:

(*Writes in the air with point of parasol.*)

"Diantha Kerr Has a Keeper."

AUNTIE

How that SOUNDS!

COLONEL

Miss Connaughton, the suggestion your niece has made is, I believe, an excellent one!

AUNTIE

Colonel Avery!

DIANTHA

(*To Colonel.*)

Thank you!

COLONEL

Such a man would fulfil your requirements, and — considering the trend of Miss Kerr's investigations, —

(*Diantha smiles and nods.*)

(*Severely.*)

as well as her conversation, —

(*Diantha looks injured.*)

it is desirable that her escort be unable to hear ;

(*Pause. Significantly.*)

likewise to talk !

AUNTIE

You're right !

DIANTHA

(*Rises.*)

You'll get him today ?

COLONEL

Well, as to that —

(*Auntie rises.*)

DIANTHA

I wanted to attend a meeting of the Feather Workers yesterday —

(*Teasingly; to Auntie.*)

but, of course, the moment I mentioned it, Auntie developed ocular neuralgia.

COLONEL

(*Looking at watch.*)

I have a case coming up in court in half an hour, so —

(*Telephone rings. Takes receiver.*)

Hello ! Dr. Grant ? Here ?

AUNTIE

(*Annoyed.*)

Dr. Grant!

DIANTHA

(*Pleased.*)

Oh, Doctor Fanny!

COLONEL

(*Into telephone.*)

Dr. Grant wishes to see my nephew. He's gone out.

AUNTIE

(*To Colonel.*)

Dr. Grant ENCOURAGES Diantha in everything.

(*Dr. Fanny Grant enters - U-R-C-. She is tall and statuesque; professional but not mannish; about thirty.*)

DOCTOR

I must see him!

(*Comes down.*)

Hello, Diantha! Good morning, Miss Connaughton!

(*Auntie bows stiffly.*)

COLONEL

(*Rises.*)

Madam, you intrude!

DOCTOR

I beg your pardon, sir, but I was called here to see Philip Martin—he's sick!

COLONEL

If he were, he'd hardly call a woman physician.

DOCTOR

Ah! You confine my profession to the men?

COLONEL

I'm somewhat old-fashioned, I suppose.

DOCTOR

It's womanly to create life, but it's unwomanly to preserve it!

AUNTIE

(*Shakes head.*)

St, st, st, st!

COLONEL

(*Into 'phone.*)

Hello! Kindly ask Mr. Martin to step here.

DOCTOR

(*To Diantha.*)

Of course he disapproves of you?

DIANTHA

Disapproves! And THEN some!

DOCTOR

Well, if all women were Eugenists —

AUNTIE

Colonel Avery, we'll retire. Come, Diantha!

COLONEL

No! No!

DOCTOR

(*To Auntie.*)

Why did you ever COME?

COLONEL

Now, Dr. Grant, I —

DOCTOR

Colonel Avery, you know as well as I do that there isn't a living in peacemaking. It's a lawyer's business to stir up trouble.

(*Colonel is overwhelmed.*)

AUNTIE

I didn't come to consult Colonel Avery on a question of law.

DOCTOR

(*To Diantha.*)

What? Escort?

DIANTHA

I've agreed to have one if he's deaf and dumb.

DOCTOR

My dear, that's an inspiration!

(*Philip enters up -R-, and whispers to Colonel.*)

Of course he'll spy; but he can't listen to what you say, and then throw it up afterward.

(*Laughs.*)

And he can't talk, talk, talk —

(*Sobers to sternness as she sees Philip.*)

Mr. Philip Martin?

(*Philip bows.*)

Is there anything the matter with you?

PHILIP

The whole thing is a wretchedly foolish joke.

DOCTOR

JOKE?

(*To Diantha, indicating Philip.*)

And THAT can vote!

(*Angrily.*)

Here we are, two intelligent women, and we seem to be completely surrounded by foolishness.

AUNTIE

(*Goes -R-.*)

We shall sit in here, Diantha!

DIANTHA

Yes, Auntie.

(*Goes -R-. To Doctor.*)

Do call and see my escort.

DOCTOR

I will.

(*Diantha exits -R-, after Auntie.*)

COLONEL

(*Closes door, comes down to Doctor.*)

Doctor Grant, I wish to apologize for my nephew.

DOCTOR

No apology is necessary from you, Colonel Avery. I'm sure you had nothing to do with it.

(*To Philip.*)

But, as for YOU — you shan't get out of this so easily. You think it's a joke to drag a physician around the city at all times of the day and night —

(*Philip protests.*)

Four times in thirty-six hours! When I might be really needed somewhere. You young triflers, who sit in an office and think you work.

(*Holds out hand.*)

Five dollars, please!

PHILIP

(*Hand in pocket.*)

For — what?

(*Colonel signals to pay, goes to desk down -L-, gathers documents together.*)

DOCTOR

For wasting my time.

PHILIP

But I didn't call you.

(*Gives money.*)

DOCTOR

And now I'm going to hire a GOOD lawyer, and teach you young gentlemen a lesson.

(*Goes up.*)

COLONEL

But Mr. Martin has paid you.

DOCTOR

Oh! Then in a case where I DIDN'T get my pay — ?

(*Exits - U-R-C-.*)

PHILIP

Colonel!

COLONEL

Which one didn't pay?

PHILIP

Henry!

COLONEL

And why not?

PHILIP

Well, you see, sir, she charged Henry forty dollars.

COLONEL

I must get it for him.

(*Starts toward safe.*)

PHILIP

But, Colonel — !

COLONEL

(*Halts.*)

I can't have this thing become public.

PHILIP

The — the combination isn't acting very well.

(*Peter enters - U-L-C-, carrying newspaper; he looks worried.*)

COLONEL

(*To Philip. Stares at safe.*)

The combination?

PETER

Uncle !

(*Colonel faces Peter, who indicates himself as the guilty person.*)

COLONEL

(*To Peter.*)

You tell me, sir, —?

PHILIP

Meant as a joke.

COLONEL

I'm confounded, sir ! My safe ! And that's why you couldn't pay her? Well, it serves you right, and I hope she comes back with a warrant.

PETER

BACK?

(*Philip nods, holds up fingers of one hand significantly, and taps chest.*)

COLONEL

(*To Peter.*)

Sir, you are incorrigible!

PETER

Uncle, the only successful things I've ever pulled off here were — jokes.

COLONEL

You have a fine imagination, sir, but I advise you to curb it!

PETER

I'll do more than that, Uncle. I worry you, and waste everybody's time, and make enemies. And your new partner — it'll only do you harm. So — I'm firing myself.

COLONEL

But your father's legacy doesn't come to you for another year.

PETER

All the better! Uncle, I need to be thrown on my own resources!

COLONEL

What the young men of your generation lack, sir, is discipline!

PETER

That's it! Discipline!

COLONEL

If you had to obey orders. The army for instance!

PETER

But three years!

COLONEL

All the same, you need severe discipline! Philip!

PHILIP

Yes, sir.

(*Xes to Colonel.*)

COLONEL

(*Hands Philip notes.*)

Attend to this right away. And just cast your eye over that last requirement.

(*Xes to Peter; relents a little.*)

(*Philip looks at list, goes -D-R-.*)

But don't be hasty, Peter. Think it over.

PETER

I have!

COLONEL

If you need a little help —

(*Puts hand in pocket.*)

PETER

No, Uncle, don't help me. I'm going to get a job.

(*Colonel shakes head and exits - U-L-C-.*)

PHILIP

(*Reads; amused and astonished.*)

Well! Well! What do you know about this!

PETER

(*Looks after Colonel.*)

Wanted to help me after what I'd done! I'm going to show him I deserve his generosity. I want a job!

(*Sits -R- of desk at -L-, looks over newspaper.*)

PHILIP

Trouble is, a job involves more or less work.

PETER

I'm serious, Phil. I'm on my own feet now. I'm going to make good. And all I want is a living wage.

PHILIP

(*Reads.*)

Escort for Diantha Kerr—sociological student—to accompany her to East Side — search of material for thesis — description —

(*Peter shows budding of decision to take the job.*)

Tall —

(*Peter straightens.*)

Well built —

(*Peter assents.*)

Athletic —

(*Peter taps chest.*)

Young —

(*Peter is suspicious.*)

Smart in appearance — brown eyes.

PETER

(*Rising and Xing to Philip.*)

I'll take that job!

PHILIP

What are you talking about?

PETER

Would Uncle object?

PHILIP

Nothing doing!

(*Starts up -R-.*)

PETER

(*Stops him.*)

You're not going to turn me down and hunt for someone else?

PHILIP

You're holding me up, and the client is waiting.

PETER

Waiting?

PHILIP

(*Indicates door -R-.*)

In there.

PETER

The sociological lady?

PHILIP

That's what I said!

PETER

(*Laughs.*)

Do you know, I FELT there was something different about this office.

PHILIP

(*Sarcastic.*)

Oh, you did!

PETER

I know EXACTLY what she's like. Her young thoughts turn to philosophy. Homely! Angular! Ugh!

(*Climbs up on desk at -R-.*)

As a matter of fact, the job ought to command a good salary.

(*Leans to look through transom, becomes rigid, looks again, turns.*)

Philip! Philip!

(*Philip grins.*)

Oh, Philip! I want that job!

PHILIP

It can't be done.

PETER

(*From top of desk.*)

Oh, don't say that! Oh, she's beautiful! Oh!

(*Leans to look through transom.*)

She's beautiful!

PHILIP

My son, you're wasting your breath.

PETER

But, Phil, do you want an escort that can be depended upon?

PHILIP

Meaning YOU?

PETER

Do you want to get back that five dollars?

PHILIP

Well, I guess you've raved enough, so I'll tell you something.

PETER

Go ahead. But there isn't anything, Phil, that can come between me and that job!

PHILIP

Miss Kerr stipulates that her escort be deaf and dumb.

PETER

WHAT?

PHILIP

Deaf and dumb

PETER

Who's the elderly person in there?

(*Points through transom.*)

PHILIP

Aunt, or something.

PETER

She's the one that's responsible for that idea! Well, that just shows how far some women will go! Deaf and dumb, eh?

(*Gets down.*)

WHY doesn't she want the escort to talk to that sweet girl? Why —?

PHILIP

That doesn't concern this office.

(*Starts up.*)

PETER

Wait!

(*Stops him.*)

I will be deaf and dumb!

PHILIP

But you couldn't!

PETER

I can look blank. You've OFTEN praised my poker face.

PHILIP

Suppose her Aunt found out?

PETER

She'll not find out!

PHILIP

Say! Look here! Haven't you been in enough trouble for one day?

PETER

Listen, Phil! Uncle says I need discipline! Well, what position could offer me more discipline? I tell you, Phil, the more discipline in the position, the better for me!

PHILIP

(*Laughs.*)

But deaf and dumb for days at a time!

PETER

It'll be easy. That girl will affect me so that I shan't be ABLE to talk.

(*Down -L-.*)

All I'll have to do is keep my mouth shut and walk beside her.

(*Bus. of showing how he would act.*)

There you are! I can pretend it to a T. Of course, occasionally I shall have to receive an order. Well,—

(*Picks up pad from desk and waves it.*)

this shall record it!

(*Produces pencil.*)

And here's a pencil to trace her commands!

PHILIP

Rave on! Rave on!

(*Starts for door.*)

PETER

And look!

(*Throws down pad and pencil.*)

I can talk on my fingers! See?

(*Bus. of clumsily forming letters with both hands.*)

A — B — C — D — How about it?

PHILIP

My boy, nothing like it !

(*Door -R- opens. Auntie enters, followed by Diantha.*)

AUNTIE

Mr. Martin, we really can't wait any longer.

(*Diantha glances at Peter. Peter comes down hastily, holds up hands to Philip and forms letters.*)

DIANTHA

Why, you've found someone !

PHILIP

Why, — er — you see —

AUNTIE

(*To Philip.*)

I thought it would take much longer. But I suppose there are institutions full of them !

PHILIP

Yes, Madam, I suppose there are.

(*Bows.*)

(*Auntie and Diantha confer.*)

(*Philip goes up, gestures to Peter to show he's washed his hands of the whole matter. Exits - U-R-C-.*)

AUNTIE

(*Looks at Peter.*)

My dear, he fits your description wonderfully !

DIANTHA

He certainly looks the polite gum-shoe !

AUNTIE

(*Drops handkerchief. Peter gallantly restores it.*)

His manners are charming!

DIANTHA

(*Crossly.*)

Of course, the IDEAL escort wouldn't butt in!

AUNTIE

I'm glad he can't hear your slang.

(*Observes Peter; mutual smiles.*)

And if he represents what our Deaf and Dumb Institutions are turning out, I certainly think the public is getting full value for its money.

DIANTHA

Oh, I hope he hasn't a queer laugh.

AUNTIE

He's very good looking.

DIANTHA

(*Nods.*)

For a deaf and dumb man. They usually wear a funny expression.

AUNTIE

He's MORE than good looking. And it's certainly fortunate he's a deaf mute. You're so pretty, Diantha, that —

DIANTHA

(*Flattered.*)

Now, Auntie!

AUNTIE

Ah, but you are, darling! And there's danger in bringing a strange young man into hourly association with you.

DIANTHA

Boo !

AUNTIE

But as this one is deaf and dumb, he'll never presume —

DIANTHA

(*Xes to -L-C-.*)

I should hope not ! Why, *I* believe in the ELIMINATION of the unfit !

(*Peter is startled.*)

AUNTIE

(*Horrified.*)

Dearest !

DIANTHA

Of course, I don't mean they should be chloroformed.

(*Peter starts.*)

But if defectives marry, they —

AUNTIE

Hush !

DIANTHA

He can't hear !

AUNTIE

Oh, of course !

DIANTHA

(*Declamatory.*)

If defectives marry, they pass on their infirmities to innocent children.

(*Softens.*)

Ah, when I think what I owe my own dear little —

AUNTIE

Diantha! My dearest, drop all that! You're beautiful and you're clever, and —

DIANTHA

All the more reason, Auntie, why I SHOULDN'T drop it!

(*Again declaims.*)

Beauty and erudition only make a girl MORE fit to be a mother of the race!

AUNTIE

Good heavens, Diantha, DON'T speak in such general terms!

DIANTHA

(*Firmly.*)

EVERY girl should realize that she is a prospective mother of the race, and that every man she meets is the possible father of her children!

AUNTIE

(*Sinks into chair.*)

What a dreadful thought!

DIANTHA

Such a man should have character and imagination. It's imagination that moves the world. But above everything, he should possess all his faculties. His standard of health should be one hundred per cent!

AUNTIE

(*Rises.*)

Well, this deaf and dumb idea was certainly a good one.

DIANTHA

Of course. Here we are, saying whatever we please before this man —

AUNTIE

And we may not get another as good. I shall engage him.

(*Goes to Peter; holds out hand.*)

It is gratifying to know that my niece will have your companionship and protection on her scholastic pilgrimages.

(*Peter bows over Auntie's hand.*)

DIANTHA

(*Laughing.*)

Dear Auntie, he can't hear !

AUNTIE

(*To Peter.*)

I beg your pardon.

(*Xes to Diantha.*)

I always forget.

(*Laughs at herself.*)

DIANTHA

(*Looks at watch.*)

I wish that Mr. Martin would return.

AUNTIE

(*Looks about.*)

Suppose we ring !

(*Peter smiles, gallantly steps to desk, and presses button; realizes his mistake.*)

DIANTHA

(*Startled.*)

Auntie ! He heard us !

AUNTIE

(*Stage whisper.*)

Diantha!

(*They meet down -R-.*)

DIANTHA

Doctor Fanny was right!

AUNTIE

You mean?

DIANTHA

We asked for a deaf and dumb man, and this office has palmed off an imperfect specimen.

AUNTIE

I shall find out!

(*Goes to Peter; accusingly.*)

You UNDERSTOOD me a moment ago!

(*Peter pretends to be puzzled. She raises voice; staccato.*)

I say, you understood me when I spoke of ringing.

(*Peter offers Auntie pad and pencil; she exchanges glances with Diantha, writes and hands pad to Peter. He reads; face lights up; smiles delightedly, writes and hands pad to Auntie, who reads.*)

"I read your lips."

DIANTHA

He read your lips!

AUNTIE

He read my lips!

(*They stare at each other. Auntie gives Peter pad.*)

DIANTHA

Oh, this man won't do!

(*Xes -R- as if to exit.*)

(*Peter is disgusted with himself.*)

AUNTIE

Wait, dear! Wait! Perhaps it's fortunate that he CAN read the lips.

DIANTHA

I might JUST as well have an escort that can hear!

AUNTIE

But circumstances may arise —

DIANTHA

I won't have him!

(Philip enters from -R-. His manner has completely changed since his exit. He shows that he will abet Peter's plan. Peter is surprised and pleased.)

AUNTIE

It seems this gentleman can read the lips.

PHILIP

Oh, he reads the lips, does he?

DIANTHA

I won't have a professor of lip-reading.

PHILIP

But, — er — does he always understand?

(Peter looks appealingly at Diantha.)

AUNTIE

Perhaps not.

DIANTHA

(*Relenting a little.*)

I'll try him.

(*Goes to speak to Peter; distinctly.*)

What is your name, please?

(*Peter pretends to try to read her lips, but is puzzled.*)

Your NAME? N-A-M-E—name?

(*Peter pretends to have understood, scribbles excitedly on pad, hands pad to Diantha, who reads.*)

"Brooklyn!"

(*She shows pity, but is pleased.*)

(*Peter is enchanted with her; puts pad in pocket.*)

AUNTIE

You see, he DOESN'T always understand.

PHILIP

And I doubt if you could do better.

DIANTHA

(*Xes -R-, looking shyly at Peter.*)

Of course, it would be annoying to have to hunt further.

AUNTIE

And we have only to turn our backs.

(*Suits action to the word.*)

DIANTHA

Or do this.

(*Takes out handkerchief and suspends it before face.*)

AUNTIE

Or wear our fans.

(*Gesture of holding up fan.*)

DIANTHA

(*Eagerly.*)

When can he begin work?

(*Peter reaches for pad and pencil, but checks himself and produces handkerchief.*)

PHILIP

He can go right along with you.

AUNTIE

(*To Diantha.*)

What do you think, dear?

DIANTHA

Oh, I guess we might as well.

AUNTIE

(*To Philip.*)

I shall engage him!

PHILIP

Fine!

(*Gestures to Peter to tell him he is to go with Auntie and Diantha. Peter shows great delight.*)

He will be pleased — the poor fellow!

DIANTHA

One really can't HELP but pity him!

PHILIP

And how he appreciates kindness. Or a smile!

AUNTIE

What is his salary?

(*Peter starts to reach for pad; stops.*)

PHILIP

What would you like to pay?

AUNTIE

I'd rather he'd name his terms.

PHILIP

(*To Peter.*)

What — salary — do — you — ask? What — salary — do — you — ask?

(*Peter hands pad to Philip, who hesitates, then writes. Peter reads, writes answer, which Philip reads.*)

"Salary no object!"

AUNTIE

Colonel Avery will decide what is just.

(*Prepares to go.*)

DIANTHA

(*Shyly.*)

Does he know — er — what his duties —?

PHILIP

Roughly! But, ah, he isn't afraid of work! Use him just as much as you like.

(*Peter digs Philip in the ribs approvingly.*)

Have him show up before breakfast and work him all day.

AUNTIE

Then I think that is all. Diantha.

(*Smiles at Peter.*)

DIANTHA

(*Goes up.*)

Yes, Auntie, dear.

(*Peter follows Diantha.*)

AUNTIE

Good morning, Mr. Martin.

PHILIP

Good morning, Miss Connaughton. Miss Kerr.

(*Bows.*)

(*Diantha bows.*)

AUNTIE

(*Halts.*)

By the way, what is his name?

DIANTHA

(*Thoughtful.*)

I suppose they do have names.

PHILIP

(*Taken aback.*)

Oh, yes, — his name — er — well — just a minute.

(*Goes to Peter.*)

What is your name? What is —?

(*Seizes pad, writes. Peter reads, writes; Philip reads.*)

"John McVicar!"

AUNTIE

Irish?

DIANTHA

Or Scotch?

PHILIP

(*To Peter.*)

Irish or Scotch?

(*Peter offers pad, Philip puts his hands behind his back. Peter writes, Philip reads.*)

"Both."

DIANTHA—AUNTIE

Ah!

AUNTIE

Well, good morning.

DIANTHA

Good morning.

PHILIP

Miss Kerr.

(*Bows.*)

(*Auntie and Diantha exit - U-R-C-.*)

(*Philip and Peter shake hands and Peter exits, grinning.*)

(*Philip calls off -R-.*)

Thad!

(*Thad enters at -R- and goes -R-C-.*)

(*Philip calls off - U-L-C-.*)

Sam! Henry!

THAD

Well, he's in for it!

(*Sam and Henry enter - U-L-C-.*)

SAM

So he wants discipline, does he?

HENRY

He wants discipline!

PHILIP

He shall have it!

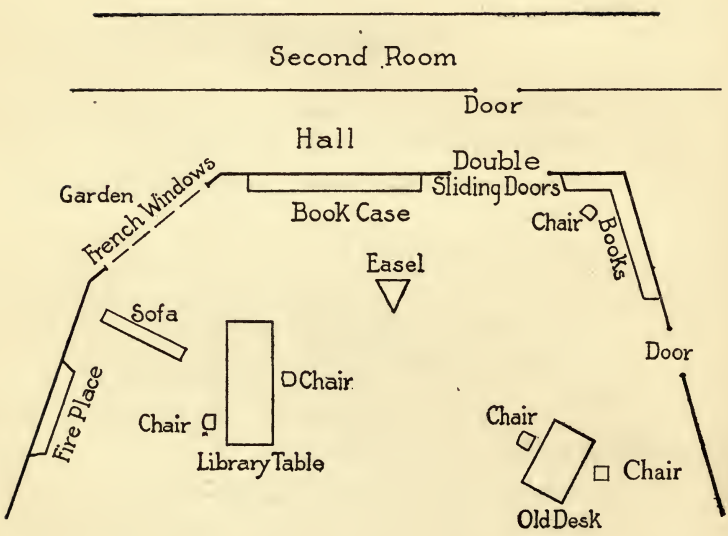
(*They gather around desk at -L-; Philip starts to unfold his plan.*)

Come over here and sit down. Now, boys, just as soon as he gets comfortably located, we'll go ahead and —

CURTAIN

ACT II

DIAGRAM OF SET



ABBREVIATIONS:

X—To cross.
C—Center.
R—Right.
L—Left.
L C—Left center.
R C—Right center.
U R C—Up right center.
U L C—Up left center.
R 1 E—Right first entrance.
R 2 E—Right second entrance.
R 3 E—Right third entrance.
L 1 E—Left first entrance.
L 2 E—Left second entrance (door as drawn).
L 3 E—Left third entrance.

ACT II

Library at Miss Connaughton's residence. There is a fireplace at -R-. Up -R- are French windows opening into a garden. Up -L-C- are double sliding doors, opening into a hall. Across the hall from the doors is a single door which affords a glimpse of another room; at -L-2-E- is a single solid door. There is a touch-button for servant's bell in right frame of double doors. The room is handsomely furnished. A large rug covers the floor. There are bookcases against the rear wall, and at -L-. Down -R- in front of the fireplace is a long library table, holding books, magazines, a telephone, and a telephone directory. Up -C- is a large easel. Down -L- is an old flat desk with chairs -R- and -L- of it. Other chairs are at either side of the library table. The hearth of the fireplace is covered by potted plants.

At rise, Peter is discovered seated down -L-, reading. His back is turned on the room.

Harriet is at -C-, standing beside the easel. She has hold of it at either side and is moving it slightly in order to set it just where it belongs. She is in housemaid's dress, and is a middle-aged, comfortable-looking woman of the "old-family-servant" type. She stands off to survey the frame.

Hans, the furnace-man, is kneeling on the hearth of the fireplace, setting some potted plants in place. He wears a colored shirt, a vest, overalls and a soft cap. He has a bushy beard.

Fetter enters -L-C-, carrying a blackboard that conceals all of him except his legs. He sets the blackboard upon the easel.

FETTER

Over your way just a little, Harriet.

(*They settle the blackboard into place.*)

HARRIET

There !

(*Bus. with erasers and chalk.*)

(*Devol enters at -L-; wears frock coat, carries silk hat, comes to old desk at -L-.*)

DEVOL

(*Looking at blackboard.*)

That's a ghastly thing to have in here.

FETTER

Well, it does mar the room, sir.

(*Exchanges look with Harriet, exits - U-L-C-.*)

DEVOL

(*Puts hat on old desk, sits, takes out papers, scowls at Peter. To Harriet.*)

Have you told Miss Connaughton about those men who called yesterday on this escort?

HARRIET

No, sir. Fetter hoped that YOU would mention the matter to Madam.

DEVOL

Fetter ! Isn't it part of his regular duty?

HARRIET

Perhaps that's true, sir. But, you see —

DEVOL

Harriet, strange men are getting into this house on the pretext of seeing this — this person. Who are these men? What do they want? How dare HE presume to have visitors?

FETTER

(*Up -L-C-; announces.*)

Mr. Percy Devol!

(*Exits -U-L-C- toward -R-.*)

(*Percy enters, comes down. He wears a Vandyke beard, and tortoise-shell glasses from which depends a narrow black ribbon.*)

DEVOL

(*Starts, rises; not pleased*)

Oh?

PERCY

Well, how's little brother?

DEVOL

(*Gloomily.*)

Disturbed — very much disturbed.

(*They shake hands.*)

PERCY

(*Melodramatic.*)

I know! Starving poor! Unemployed! Bread line! Broken heart!

(*Pokes Devol in ribs.*)

DEVOL

(*Shakes head warningly.*)

It's this deaf and dumb escort. We don't know where he's from.

(*To Harriet.*)

Or that he's a fit person to have about.

(*Harriet agrees, exits nervously at -L-.*)

PERCY

(*Looks across at Peter.*)

Hah! The noiseless accompaniment —

(*Gesture.*)

of a tireless soprano!

DEVOL

Percy!

(*Indicates Hans.*)

I WISH you wouldn't turn up here.

PERCY

Ungrateful dog!

DEVOL

You mean — ?

PERCY

Couldn't tell you over the 'phone, my precious. But — there's something in the breeze!

DEVOL

Good?

PERCY

(*Lowers voice.*)

FRIGHTFULLY good! The chance of our young lives! Oh, I've said that before. But this time it's a nailer! And all we need is a paltry thousand!

DEVOL

I'll go along with you.

(*Takes up hat.*)

(*Fetter enters -U-L-C- from -R- with flowers, comes down, arranges flowers in vase on library table.*)

(*Devol takes Percy's arm, starts up.*)

Fetter, those visitors must be mentioned to Miss Connaughton.

(*Indicates Peter.*)

FETTER

Oh, sir, — I hesitate —

DEVOL

(*Turns at door - U-L-C-. Impressively.*)

Fetter, we don't even know that he's HONEST !

(*Both exit - U-L-C-, talking.*)

HARRIET

(*Thrusts head in at -L-. Stage whisper.*)

Fetter !

FETTER

(*Puts finger to lips.*)

Hans !

HANS

(*Rises and turns.*)

Was ist?

FETTER

The chimney-flue in the blue room.

HANS

Ja. Ich weiss.

(*Exits - U-L-C- and into second room.*)

HARRIET

(*Aloud.*)

ARE you going to tell Madam about those men?

FETTER

Why should I? Madam knows it ain't proper, taking a deaf and dumb man right into the family, and scouting about the town with him at all hours of the day and night.

HARRIET

Just the same, I think you OUGHT to tell. I was so nervous all night long.

FETTER

I listened for noises myself.

HARRIET

And suppose you DON'T tell, and — something happens?

FETTER

(*Warning.*)

Sh!

(*Xes to window -R-.*)

(*Auntie appears outside the French windows. She wears a house-dress, and has a fan of a contrasting color swinging from her belt.*)

(*Harriet changes the position of a chair. Fetter opens the French windows.*)

AUNTIE

(*Entering.*)

Oo —oo!

(*Shrugs as if cold.*)

(*Peter starts to rise, checks himself.*)

FETTER

There's a bit of snap in the air, Madam.

(*Closes the French windows.*)

AUNTIE

(*Comes down.*)

Is everything in readiness?

(*Looks at blackboard.*)

FETTER

Yes, Madam.

AUNTIE

Very good.

(*Goes -L-.*)

(*Harriet signals Fetter, urging him to speak.*)

FETTER

Oh, Madam!

AUNTIE

(*Halts.*)

Yes?

FETTER

A gentleman called on Mr. McVicar yesterday afternoon, when he was out with Miss Diantha.

(*Peter is disturbed.*)

AUNTIE

Ah?

FETTER

Another gentleman called in the evening, but Mr. McVicar was not in.

AUNTIE

Well?

(*Harriet again urges Fetter to speak.*)

FETTER

(*Lowers voice; to Auntie.*)

I — I was wishing YOU might've got a look at the callers.

AUNTIE

Please explain yourself, Fetter.

FETTER

Well, of course, deaf and dumb gentlemen's friends is — is naturally different.

(*Peter smiles.*)

AUNTIE

(*Coldly.*)

Mr. McVicar was vouched for by Colonel Avery.

(*Harriet exits -L-.*)

FETTER

I — I fear I've presumed on my long service with you, Madam.

(*Exits - U-L-C-.*)

(*Diantha enters* at *-L-. She wears a house-dress. In her right hand is an open copy of the sign-manual, which she is studying. With her left hand she is laboriously forming the single-hand alphabet, holding her hand high. She has a fan suspended from her belt.*)

DIANTHA

(*Distinctly.*)

A — B — C — D —

(*Peter peers back stealthily.*)

(*Auntie goes to her, takes the book and looks at it.*)

Oh, Auntie, just studying the manual has made me realize how dreadful it is that he should be d— and d—.

(*Peter straightens.*)

AUNTIE

(*Shocked.*)

D — and d— !

DIANTHA

(*Goes to library table.*)

I can't bear to say the words.

AUNTIE

But, darling! D—and d—! It sounds profane.

(*Auntie reads manual. Goes to library table.*)

DIANTHA

(*Picks up a bright quill.*)

Oh, but I've got a lot to do.

(*Glances at Peter.*)

AUNTIE

(*Sits, reading manual.*)

Going out?

DIANTHA

No, Auntie.

(*Takes a manuscript from a drawer.*)

I shall devote the entire afternoon to certain automorphic deductions, and to the correlation of all the new concrete examples that I noted on the East Side yesterday afternoon and last evening.

AUNTIE

Thesis coming along well?

DIANTHA

Oh, peachy!

(*Takes up sheet of paper.*)

Listen to this!

(*Reads; declamatory, with gestures.*)

Study the history of the generously invited alien, who comes to the United States with his few pitiful belongings, and you learn the record of old customs cast aside, of Old-World ambitions supplanted for New-World achievements. How he becomes an atom of the great forward-moving mass, how he —

(*Catches Peter's eye; smiles.*)

How do you do!

(*He smiles, buries face in book.*)

AUNTIE

A most interesting — and proper — subject.

DIANTHA

(*Suddenly busy. Gets books from case - U-R-, brings them to table.*)

More reading, and more investigating. The Associated Waiters are to meet, and the Newsboys' League.

(*Harriet enters at -L-, carrying a sewing-basket.*)

AUNTIE

(*Rises. To Diantha; puts up fan to shield lips.*)

The basket! Please be careful!

(*Goes -L-.*)

(*Peter rises as Auntie passes behind him. Harriet Xes to table and sets down the basket, takes dainty apron from table drawer. The apron matches the quill. She puts it on Diantha. Auntie shows Peter the sign-manual.*)

I think everyone should master this.

(*Peter smiles and nods.*)

I'm glad you agree with me.

(*Harriet goes up.*)

And Harriet, I want to see Mr. Devol when he returns.

HARRIET

Yes, Madam.

(*Exits - U-L-C-.*)

DIANTHA

(*Annoyed.*)

Mr. Devol! Oh, Auntie, I wish you could arrange to distribute your charity gifts personally.

AUNTIE

(*At -L-.*)

I'd rather not appear in those matters, Diantha. And what difference does it make, dear, so long as deserving people get the money. A — B — C — D —

(*Exits forming letters, the manual in her left hand, right hand held high.*)

(*Peter goes up -L-.*)

DIANTHA

(*Xes to him.*)

See!

(*They meet in front of blackboard. She forms swift letters with right hand. Peter stares at her hand.*)

And this!

(*Forms a sentence. Peter looks puzzled.*)

When I get perfect, won't it be great?

(*Forms other letters.*)

(*Peter shakes head.*)

You don't understand? That's because I don't know it very well. Now see if I can do it.

(*Peter watches her, looks dubious, shakes head, writes on blackboard.*)

PETER

Method.

(*Points to himself to indicate that the method she is studying is not his.*)

DIANTHA

Not your method?

(*Peter erases board.*)

What method DO you use?

PETER

(*Writes.*)

Bertillon.

DIANTHA

Bertillon!

(*Puzzled.*)

Bertillon!

(*Speaks very precisely.*)

Why, I thought Bertillon had something to do with the Police.

(*Peter erases Bertillon quickly.*)

Well,—

(*Stoutly.*)

Then I'll study the Bertillon method.

PETER

(*Writes.*)

Face close.

(*Pantomines that he can always understand her when her face is close.*)

DIANTHA

If my face is close?

(*Peter nods.*)

You always understand?

(*Peter nods vigorously.*)

(*Lifts her face very close.*)

Oh, I'm so glad!

(*Pause, their faces near, their eyes meeting. She smiles at him shyly. His look is tender and full of yearning. She lowers her eyes. He restrains himself from touching her hands.*)

FETTER

(*Enters - U-L-C-.*)

Another gentleman is calling on Mr. McVicar!

(*Peter is startled.*)

DIANTHA

Oh!

(*To Peter.*)

A gentleman is calling on you.

(*Face close.*)

A gentleman is calling on you!

(*Peter pantomimes that he does not wish to see anyone.*)

Oh, you mustn't send him away.

(*Peter gestures "no" emphatically to Fetter, and points out manuscript to Diantha.*)

But you won't disturb me!

(*Peter protests that he will.*)

No, no, you won't!

(*To Fetter.*)

Ask the gentleman in.

(*Fetter bows and exits - U-L-C-.*)

My work isn't EVERYTHING!

(*Peter's manner is apprehensive. He turns -R-.*)

(*Fetter enters - U-L-C-, showing in Henry, who halts near door, grinning. Fetter exits - U-L-C-.*)

(*Diantha bows to Henry.*)

Won't you come in?

(*Henry returns bow, comes to Peter. The two look each other in the eye. As Diantha turns to get her manuscript, Peter threatens Henry. She turns back; they shake hands guardedly.*)

DIANTHA

(*To Peter.*)

You can have your visit here, or in the garden. Please suit yourself.

(*Henry forms letters with both hands.*)

Oh!

(*To Peter.*)

Does your friend read the lips?

(*Peter nods vigorously. Henry signals Peter to introduce him.*)

PETER

(*Writes.*)

Smith!

(*Indicates Henry.*)

DIANTHA

How do you do, Mr. Smith?

(*Henry bows.*)

PETER

(*Writes.*)

Alaska!

DIANTHA

Alaska! How interesting!

(*To Peter.*)

You'll have a lot to say to each other. So keep Mr. Smith as long as you can.

(*Xes to Henry, holds her face close.*)

Mr. McVicar will be lonely if his friends don't come to see him.

(*Henry pretends not to understand.*)

Mr. McVicar will be lonely if his friends don't come to see him. Please stay as long as you can.

(Henry is greatly taken with Diantha. Diantha bows, turns to Peter, raises fan between her face and Henry's.)

A typical Westerner! So simple!

(Peter agrees. Diantha smiles at Henry and Peter, goes to old desk at -L-, sits with back to men, writes.)

(Peter urges Henry to go. Henry puts Peter to one side, Xes to settee and sits, putting his hat on library table as he passes. Peter rushes after him, offers Henry his hat, pantomiming "You've got to go.")

(Henry rises, begins deaf and dumb talk. Diantha turns and catches them. Henry goes to bookcase up -R-, pantomimes that books are not to his taste, goes to door - U-L-C-, looks off, indicates Harriet by pantomime, sees bell, tries to press button. Peter intercepts him.)

(Henry urges Peter to sit. Peter drops down, head in hands. Henry tip-toes to see what Diantha is reading. She coughs. Henry starts, turns, begins deaf and dumb signs. Peter raises his head in alarm. Diantha pays no attention to them. Henry again tries to read title. He succeeds, and pantomimes "high brow.")

(Henry Xes back of Peter and notices a hair on Peter's shoulder. Plucks it off, compares color with Diantha's, shakes finger at Peter. Laughingly puts hair in pocket over his own heart. Tries to investigate basket. Peter seizes his hands to prevent him.)

DIANTHA

Oh, dear!

(Holds up inked fingers. Rises and hurriedly exits -L-.)

PETER

(*Stage whisper.*)

See here! You've got to leave!

HENRY

The office feels you must be cured.

(*Peter puts hand over Henry's mouth.*)

DOCTOR

(*Off stage - U-L-C-.*)

I don't wonder Mr. Devol is anxious.

(*Peter starts apprehensively.*)

FETTER

(*Off stage.*)

Indeed, Dr. Grant, he is.

(*Doctor bursts into room - U-L-C-, followed by Fetter and Harriet. Doctor is carrying a physician's bag. She comes down, looks at Peter and Henry, who talk on fingers. Doctor sets bag down, turns to Fetter. Peter and Henry listen. Fetter shields lips.*)

This is the third one in just twenty-four hours. And they're uncanny with their —

(*Makes letters.*)

HARRIET

Oh, Doctor, we'll be murdered in our beds!

DOCTOR

Now, don't get excited, Harriet. I'll look into this. Have you told Miss Kerr?

FETTER

Not yet, Doctor.

DOCTOR

I shall. I don't want her frightened. But we MUST find out who they are and where they come from.

(*Henry starts to go, picking up hat.*)

HARRIET

Oh, yes.

(*Peter and Henry shake hands.*)

FETTER

He's going, Doctor.

DOCTOR

Fetter, I want you to follow him.

(*Harriet exits - U-L-.C-.*)

Don't let him out of your sight.

FETTER

I won't!

(*Exits - U-L-C- going R.*)

(*Henry decides to remain, puts hat back on library table.*)

DIANTHA

(*Enters at -L-.*)

Why, Doctor Fanny! You here?

(*Comes C.*)

DOCTOR

I'm here because that Avery crowd has done it again.

DIANTHA

No!

DOCTOR

Yes. While I was out this morning, my office received a telephone message : " Come at once. Miss Kerr very ill."

(*Peter gestures, " Now see what you've done." Henry grins.*)

DIANTHA

Ill? I? Why, I feel it my first duty to keep well for the sake of my —

DOCTOR

(*Interrupts angrily.*)

Think of it ! Right on top of my complaint to Colonel Avery.

DIANTHA

It's disgraceful — and if there's one thing I can't forgive, it's fraud and deception.

(*Henry points at Peter.*)

DOCTOR

Well, listen to what I'm going to do.

(*Takes legal papers from bag.*)

(*Peter listens anxiously.*)

You see these? Summonses. The charge is disorderly conduct.

DIANTHA

Oh, it ought to be more serious than that.

(*Henry assents; goes up.*)

DOCTOR

No. All I want is to get that office into the newspapers.

(*Holds up one paper.*)

THIS is for that HALF-WITTED Peter Avery !

(*Henry is pleased.*)

DIANTHA

Yes.

(*Taps forehead.*)

Aging in the wood!

(*Henry laughs silently.*)

DOCTOR

That won't excuse him with the Judge.

DIANTHA

And his uncle is so charming.

DOCTOR

I tried to get Mr. Peter at his uncle's house last night —

(*Peter stares front.*)

but he's dropped from sight as completely as if the earth had opened and swallowed him up.

(*Peter grins, turns to a bookcase.*)

DIANTHA

Well, I hope you'll track him down!

(*Henry is pleased.*)

DOCTOR

Here's one I'll land.

(*Shows other paper.*)

This is for that Yonkers wretch!

(*Henry starts. Peter looks pleased.*)

DIANTHA

How can women raise such sons!

(*Looks over at Henry and Peter.*)

(*Henry forms letters to Peter with both hands. Doctor watches. Peter replies to Henry with one hand.*)

DOCTOR

Which is your escort?

DIANTHA

(*Behind fan.*)

The nice looking one.

(*Henry takes compliment to himself.*)

DOCTOR

(*Shields lips.*)

And the other?

DIANTHA

His name is Smith. He's from Alaska.

(*Henry sobers. Peter laughs.*)

DOCTOR

Fetter tells me two men called on your escort yesterday.

DIANTHA

(*Pleased.*)

Oh, really?

DOCTOR

(*Significantly.*)

Fetter says both were deaf and dumb.

DIANTHA

Well, what kind of friends would a d— and d— man have?

DOCTOR

But don't you think they're coming pretty thick?

DIANTHA

I can't begrudge him callers!

DOCTOR

Callers! It's a procession. The whole Institution's turning out.

DIANTHA

And it will be welcome. He lives in a world of silence. Oh, the tragedy of it!

(*Henry holds out hands in mock pity. Peter takes one, shakes it.*)

You are leaving, Mr. Smith? Well, good-bye.

(*Xes to Henry, holds face close.*)

And come again!

(*Henry pretends not to understand.*)

Come AGAIN!

(*Henry bows to Diantha, who goes to library table. Henry bows to Doctor. Doctor nods curtly. Henry starts up.*)

DOCTOR

We shall meet — anon!

(*Henry halts, then exits -U-C-, going -L-. Fetter appears in hall from -R-, hat and coat on, follows Henry. Doctor comes down, looks at Peter.*)

So you like the escort idea?

(*Peter takes a book from the library table.*)

DIANTHA

(*Xes to -R-C-.*)

Why, in just these twenty-four hours, I've accomplished heaps.

(*Enthusiastically.*)

Last night we attended the Plasterers' Annual Ball. Oh, he's a corking dancer!

(*Peter is pleased.*)

DOCTOR

He fills the bill, eh?

DIANTHA

Oh, perfectly! He's — he's so — so — I want you to meet him.

(*Xes to Peter, lifts her face.*)

I want Doctor Grant to know you.

(*Peter starts guiltily, Xes -L- with Diantha.*)

Doctor Grant!

(*To Doctor.*)

Mr. John McVicar!

(*Doctor acknowledges introduction. Peter bows respectfully, makes letters with right hand.*)

DOCTOR

(*Shakes head.*)

Oh, I don't understand it — no!

(*Peter excuses himself in pantomime, goes -L- to bookcase.*)

What's the history of his case?

DIANTHA

I don't know.

(*Shakes head, looks after Peter.*)

DOCTOR

Probably defective ANCESTORS!

(*Xes to -R-.*)

DIANTHA

(*Stares front.*)

Do d— and d— people have d— and d— CHILDREN?

DOCTOR

Not necessarily!

DIANTHA

NOT?

(*Xes to Doctor.*)

DOCTOR

Usually there's nothing wrong with their VOCAL apparatus. They're dumb simply because they can't hear. Doesn't he ever try to speak?

(*Peter starts.*)

DIANTHA

(*Eagerly.*)

You mean — he could LEARN?

DOCTOR

He might. But if he begins to talk, you'll have to hunt another escort.

(*Looks at Peter.*)

And this one really does seem nice.

DIANTHA

Doctor, you're a dear.

(*Embraces her.*)

Yes, you are!

(*Kisses her. Change of manner to indifference.*)

As you say, he does seem nice, and I can't help but admire the way he bears what would be worse than death to most men.

(*Peter proud of himself. Crosses knees.*)

(*Diantha grows enthusiastic.*)

THAT's the kind of bravery I like! It's the kind I cultivate in my sons!

(*Peter is startled.*)

DOCTOR

Sons! Huh! It's a lot more sensible to have daughters.

(*Sits -R- of library table.*)

(*Peter looks puzzled.*)

DIANTHA

Ah, but my boys have grown very dear to me.

(*Peter is mystified; peers over top of book.*)

DOCTOR

(*Indulgently.*)

How ARE all your children?

(*Peter drops book.*)

DIANTHA

My children were never better. As usual, I gave up my whole morning to them. And see!

(*Opens sewing-basket, takes out baby's cap, shows it to Doctor, screens it from Peter by opening fan.*)

DOCTOR

That will look fine on little Phoebe.

(*Peter silently repeats "Phoebe."*)

DIANTHA

Phoebe! It's for Hope!

DOCTOR

Hope?

DIANTHA

(*Nods.*)

The littlest one!

(*Kisses cap.*)

DOCTOR

Hope! Rather striking name for a last child.

(*Peter hides face.*)

DIANTHA

Now, don't tease!

(*Takes basket, kneels -R- of Doctor.*)

DOCTOR

Let me see! The last time I asked about the family, you reported five.

DIANTHA

(*Proudly.*)

Now, — we are seven!

(*Peter stares front in amazement.*)

DOCTOR

You reckless woman!

DIANTHA

But life is a process of continuous creation. Doctor, this morning I decided what Frederick is going to be. You see, William will go into the Army, and Thomas will be an architect, and Phoebe a great artist, and —

DOCTOR

Whoa, there!

(*Pause.*)

Good Heavens, girl! They aren't BORN yet!

DIANTHA

That's a detail!

(*Peter falls back in his chair.*)

DOCTOR

Granted! But how do you know they're going to do what you want?

(*Shakes finger.*)

Young lady, you're letting yourself in for some disappointments.

DIANTHA

You and I know, Doctor, that prenatal influence is thoroughly scientific.

DOCTOR

Sometimes!

DIANTHA

My children shall be good and beautiful. I can even determine the type of TALENT each will possess. All I've got to do is to meet the question in time.

DOCTOR

Well, you've got a fine start.

DIANTHA

Now, for instance, Frederick will edit one of the big magazines. So —

DOCTOR

And just how are you going to mould a literary light?

DIANTHA

(*Enthusiastic.*)

I shall hold magazine thoughts over Frederick.

(*Clasps hands, lifts face front.*)

I'll think of manuscripts, and great authors, and illustrations.

DOCTOR

(*Mock enthusiasm.*)

And your eldest daughter will be a prima donna, and Hope —

DIANTHA

(*Turns to Doctor.*)

Yes!

DOCTOR

Hope will run for Governor!

(*Peter laughs, chokes, holds book close, pretends to be amused by it. Doctor and Diantha rise, look at each other, and at him. Doctor Xes looks over his shoulder. Peter shows Doctor the open book.*)

Mark Twain!

(*Xes down.*)

DIANTHA

Doctor, I can't make plans for Hope. She's such a baby!

DOCTOR

I suppose nothing short of President of the United States will suit Peter.

(*Peter starts.*)

DIANTHA

As eldest son, Peter is to follow in his FATHER'S footsteps.

(*Matter of fact.*)

Whatever that IS.

(*Peter shows concern.*)

DOCTOR

Heaven grant it isn't the law!

DIANTHA

No; it's going to be civil engineering, or something like that —

(*Peter shows more concern.*)

something big, and splendid, and out-of-doors !

DOCTOR

Better get busy and find him !

DIANTHA

Him?

DOCTOR

The SIRE of your seven.

DIANTHA

Ah, Doctor, that isn't an easy matter. I realize that my husband's bad qualities will be inherited by our children as well as his good. So whenever a man proposes to me, I apply a test. I say to myself, "Should I like to see this man's characteristics repeated in Frederick, or William, or Thomas, or Hope?" If I feel I shouldn't —

(*Gestures to imaginary suitor.*)

On your way !

DOCTOR

Men are somewhat necessary. But they're not a wholly essential factor in the life of their children.

(*Sits at old desk.*)

DIANTHA

(*Xes to Doctor, shakes finger, arguing.*)

But, heredity, Doctor. A woman chooses her children when she chooses their father.

DOCTOR

Then right here, young lady, all your expectations go to smash. WHERE will you find a man with the combined characteristics of Peter, Diantha, William, Thomas, Jerome —

DIANTHA

Not Jerome! — FREDERICK.

DOCTOR

Oh, Frederick. And what's that other one?

DIANTHA

Phoebe!

DOCTOR

Oh, yes,— Phoebe, and Hope. To say nothing of any additional —

DIANTHA

No! Seven! Seven are PLENTY!

(*Peter agrees.*)

DOCTOR

At any rate, Diantha, I'm convinced that you're right about one thing.

(*Diantha looks inquiring.*)

The betterment of the race DOES come before the silly question of personal attraction.

DIANTHA

(*Taken aback.*)

Of course, the race IS paramount. But — I must marry a man I love. I MUST!

(*Steals glance at Peter.*)

DOCTOR

Well, if you must, he's likely to be shy a characteristic or two.

(*Peter rises and faces bookcase, his back to audience.*)

DIANTHA

But suppose — suppose I loved a man, and he had all the qualities; ALL of them. Brave, manly, tender, — and yet lacked — er — that is, well, suppose he was deficient in — in just some faculty.

DOCTOR

(*Points warning finger.*)

But, remember! One hundred per cent.!

DIANTHA

Oh, Doctor!

(*Sits -R- of library table.*)

DOCTOR

(*Follows.*)

By the way, which of your sons is to be named after his father?

DIANTHA

Oh, I forgot!

DOCTOR

Well, as a matter of simple justice, one child ought to be named after its father — in a family of seven.

DIANTHA

There'll have to be eight!

DOCTOR

(*Behind Diantha.*)

Ah, Diantha! And every one of them is going to be welcome!

DIANTHA

Welcome! There shouldn't be an unwelcome baby in the world!

DOCTOR

Little mother-girl!

(*Harriet enters - U-L-C-.*)

HARRIET

Doctor!

(*Exits, followed by Doctor.*)

DIANTHA

My babies! Ah, the happy hours I spend with them!

(*Smiles as if at children gathered about her chair.*)

Their little hands reach out to me! Their sweet eyes look into mine! Their curly heads cluster at my knee!

(*Puts out right hand as if on head of child standing, shoulder-high. Smiling, drops hand as if from head to head of five others in a circle about her. Puts arms in position of holding baby, leans back, rocks gently, sings, improvising.*)

(*Peter watches her tenderly.*)

Bye-low, baby dear,
Bye-low, baby mine,
Go to sleep on mother's breast,
Shut your eyes, and go to sleep;

(*Peter rises; Xes slowly toward her.*)

Oh, my baby dear,
Bye-low, bye-low, bye.
Go to sleep my —

(*On the last "bye-low" of the song, Diantha rises and moves -C- as if still cuddling a sleeping child. Meets Peter's look, lets arms fall, embarrassed. The two stand looking into each other's eyes. Peter moves his hand forward as if about to take hers, then resists impulse.*)

DIANTHA

I've got good news for you.

(*Peter gestures "For me?" Diantha nods.*)

You can learn to speak.

(*Peter half turns -R-; she touches his arm to turn him back.*)

Oh, I've hurt your feelings! Oh, forgive me! Forgive me!

(*Peter shakes head.*)

You don't speak simply because you don't hear.

(*Peter agrees.*)

Were you — born — this way?

(*Peter shakes head.*)

How long ago did it happen?

(*Peter spreads arms wide.*)

A long time ago? What — caused it?

(*Peter hesitates, pantomimes "shock" by rising on toes and dropping hard on heels.*)

Shock!

(*Peter nods.*)

You were struck dumb?

(*Peter assents.*)

It affected your hearing!

(*Peter gestures to show it also affected his heart.*)

And your heart?

(*He nods vigorously.*)

But those will improve!

(*Peter gestures that he doubts it.*)

Oh, they will! Doctors do WONDERFUL things these days!

(*Peter looks his gratitude, but gestures he is hopeless.*)

Oh, if you could only speak!

(*Peter starts.*)

If you could only speak!

(*Peter restrains temptation to speak.*)

I want you to speak! Try! Try!

(*Peter almost speaks, then gestures he cannot.*)

Please try! Say "Man"!

(*Again Peter seems about to speak, but restrains himself.*)

Oh, try again! It's easy! Man! See! Put your lips together like mine!

(*Peter observes her lips, attempts again.*)

That's it. So!

(*She puts her fingers to his lips.*)

PETER

(*Writes on blackboard.*)

Wicked!

(*Beats his breast self-accusingly.*)

DIANTHA

Wicked! Well, you've been MORE than punished!

(*Peter assents.*)

Ah, but was it so DREADFUL, what you did?

(*Peter nods.*)

But you were tempted?

(*He nods vigorously.*)

What was the temptation?

(*Peter turns away. She turns him back.*)

Oh, tell me! I'm your friend. Maybe I can help you. Tell me!

PETER

(*Hesitates; writes.*)

Girl!

DIANTHA

Girl!

(*Manner changes to injured reserve. Falls back a step.*)

Girl!

(*Peter follows, then goes -L- to desk, sits, disconsolate.*)

(*Hans enters - U-L-C-.*)

Hans!

HANS

Was ist?

DIANTHA

(*Points to blackboard.*)

Take it away! Take it away!

(*Turns -R- sadly, takes off apron.*)

HANS

Ich weiss!

(*Hans looks at board, then at Diantha, and hurries out with board, meeting Doctor in doorway. Doctor stares at board. Hans revolves once, goes -L-. Doctor Xes to Diantha at desk.*)

DOCTOR

Diantha, I'm sorry, but you've got to know about it!

(*Peter listens.*)

DIANTHA

About what, Doctor?

DOCTOR

Mr. Smith of Alaska!

(*Peter is concerned.*)

DIANTHA

Anything wrong?

DOCTOR

I'm afraid so. When he left, Fetter followed him.

DIANTHA

Why, DOCTOR!

DOCTOR

I thought it best. I've just been talking to Fetter on the pantry 'phone. From the very start, Smith seemed to know he was being shadowed. He tried to shake Fetter off. And if he isn't up to something, why should he do that? Well, Fetter wouldn't shake. Now they're in the lobby of a hotel — resting.

DIANTHA

But what an affront to Mr. McVicar!

DOCTOR

The safety of this house is more important than Mr. McVicar's feelings!

(*Harriet enters - U-L-C-.*)

DIANTHA

And if Mr. Smith isn't guilty —

HARRIET

Fetter is still on the pantry 'phone, Doctor Grant!

DOCTOR

(*To Diantha.*)

Come and talk to him yourself.

(*Leads Diantha up.*)

When you hear what he has to tell —

(*Ad lib as they exit.*)

(*Peter sits staring front.*)

(*Harriet starts toward table -R- to arrange basket.*)

(*Sam enters at French windows.*)

HARRIET

(*Sees him.*)

Oh! What are you coming in this way for?

(*Sam forms letters to her with his hands, smiles and comes down.*)

(*Harriet gives both a frightened look, Xes to Peter, taps his shoulder, motions to indicate Sam, exits quickly - U-L-C-. Peter and Sam face each other. Sam grins.*)

PETER

(*Loud whisper.*)

What are you doing here?

(*Sam puts hat on table -R-. Makes letters.*)

PETER

Now, listen, Sam. Don't carry this joke too far. That isn't funny.

(*Sam makes exaggerated and ridiculous attempts to talk on fingers.*)

You fellows let up on me, and I'll never play another practical joke. I'm going to go the minute I can get away gracefully. Have a little pity on me, Sam. I'll never bother you fellows again. I'll leave town. Yes, I will. I'll go West, and ranch — or — or — well, something in the great out-of-doors, but please go!

(*Peter makes letters to Sam, as Harriet, Auntie, Doctor and Diantha enter - U-L-C-. All stare at Sam.*)

HARRIET

All of a sudden, here he was!

AUNTIE

From the garden!

(*Peter makes letters.*)

DIANTHA

Another d— and d—!

DOCTOR

That makes four!

AUNTIE

Oh! And Fetter gone!

(*Sam grins at Peter.*)

DOCTOR

But he must not leave this house!

(*Sam sobers, starts, reaches for hat.*)

Harriet! Call the furnace-man. Have him watched every minute!

(*Urges Harriet out - U-L-C-.*)

HARRIET

Oh, I'm afraid!

(*Exits - U-L-C-.*)

(*Sam bows to each of the ladies, goes up.*)

DOCTOR

(*As Sam bows.*)

He thinks he's going.

(*Sam meets Hans, goes through door, and -R-, followed by Hans.*)

(*Doctor Xes to window.*)

Where's the key?

(*Diantha takes key from nail at side of French windows.*)

AUNTIE

But, wait, Doctor. Do you think we ought to —

DOCTOR

Miss Connaughton, that man deliberately broke into this house.

DIANTHA

(*Gives Doctor key.*)

But maybe Mr. McVicar invited him.

DOCTOR

(*Locks window.*)

We mustn't let him slip through our fingers.

(*Turns, puts key in telephone directory.*)

DIANTHA

Auntie, let's ask Colonel Avery to come.

AUNTIE

Yes! He'll explain everything.

DOCTOR

Oh, WHY borrow MORE trouble?

DIANTHA

But we got Mr. McVicar at the Colonel's office.

(*Harriet enters - U-L-C-, halts.*)

HARRIET

(*Voice trembling with fear.*)

Oh, Madam, could you step to the front door — just a moment?

AUNTIE

What is it, Harriet?

(*Exits with Harriet.*)

DIANTHA

Doctor, PLEASE don't oppose Colonel Avery's coming. I want him. There's a reason.

DOCTOR

The escort?

DIANTHA

No,—Auntie!

DOCTOR

Auntie?

DIANTHA

I have learned the secret of Lavinia Connaughton's life!

DOCTOR

Oh, go on!

DIANTHA

Listen! Yesterday, when I met Colonel Avery, I KNEW I'd seen him somewhere.

DOCTOR

And — where?

DIANTHA

(*Leans over table*; *impressively.*)

On Auntie's dressing-table!

DOCTOR

Woman, you have deceived us!

DIANTHA

Worse than that! When I mentioned the photograph, she FIBBED! Doesn't that look — hopeful?

DOCTOR

My dear, you're not going to try to —

(*Peter listens, smiling.*)

DIANTHA

Indeed, I am! It all came to me like a shot—at the Plasterers' Ball. What will happen to my little Auntie, I asked myself, when I leave THIS home for a home of my own? She'll miss me. And she'll miss the children!

(*Peter agrees.*)

AUNTIE

(*Enters - U-L-C-.*)

Oh, Diantha!

(*Peter starts.*)

DIANTHA

Yes?

DOCTOR

Well?

AUNTIE

The two men who called last night are at the corner.

(*Peter looks angry.*)

DIANTHA

HERE?

DOCTOR

That looks bad!

AUNTIE

Oh, what shall we do?

DIANTHA

We MUST telephone Colonel Avery!

(*Peter starts.*)

AUNTIE

Yes, we must!

(*Takes up 'phone; into it.*)

Beekman, four, o, three, one.

(*Sam passes door - U-L-C-, followed by Hans.*)

(*Into phone.*)

Hello! Colonel Avery, please. Thank you. Oh, how do you do, Colonel Avery. This is Miss Connaughton. Yes. We are just a little alarmed about several gentlemen who've called on Mr. McVicar — the escort — yes. Oh, that will be VERY nice.

DOCTOR

What?

AUNTIE

(*Into phone.*)

Good-bye.

(*Hangs up phone.*)

Oh, dear, my hair!

(*Xes -L-.*)

DOCTOR

What's the matter?

AUNTIE

He's coming!

(*Exits -L-.*)

(*Peter rises. Sam enters - U-L-C-, urging Peter to leave. Peter motions Sam out.*)

DOCTOR

(*Excitedly.*)

Look — the escort!

(*At exit, Sam bumps into Hans.*)

DIANTHA

You think — ?

DOCTOR

Something's wrong! Something's wrong!

DIANTHA

(*Down -C-; sadly.*)

Well, Doctor, I've come to the conclusion that you're right.

(*Nods.*)

There is something wrong.

DOCTOR

Wrong? Diantha, that escort is bringing a deaf and dumb gang into this house.

(*Peter takes step forward.*)

DIANTHA

Oh, no.

(*Peter halts.*)

I don't think THAT! They're queer, and seem rude. But, Doctor, they haven't an equal chance with other men. So — they're different!

DOCTOR

Yes, they're VERY different.

(*Watches Diantha as she Xes to Peter; halts.*)

DIANTHA

I — I don't think I'll work on my thesis — for some time. And — and I'm not going to the East Side again — soon. So — if you'd LIKE to make different arrangements —

(*Chokes with tears, lowers head, goes -L- slowly, exits.*)

(*Peter watches her go.*)

DOCTOR

(*At Peter.*)

Hm! So THAT's the way she feels about you!

(*Goes up toward bell.*)

(*Sam Xes by door of second room - U-L-C-, followed by Hans.*)

(*Doctor rings bell, then Xes down -L- quickly. Peter turns, as if about to speak. They meet.*)

Oh, but he'd like to talk! May I ask you a question?

(*Peter pretends not to understand.*)

A question?

(*Writes question mark in air.*)

(*Peter understands, assents.*)

How did you lose your hearing?

(*Peter is puzzled, offers her a book.*)

No! No! Your hearing — how did you lose it?

(*Touches her own ears, then his.*)

(*Peter pretends to be puzzled, takes out handkerchief, wipes left ear, goes -R- to mirror, looks at his left ear.*)

(*Harriet enters - U-L-C-.*)

Harriet, turn your back!

(*Doctor also faces away from Peter.*)

We've locked up here, and I've hid the key in the telephone book!

(*Peter looks at telephone directory.*)

Now, I'm going down on the Avenue. And if those two men call again, you show them in.

HARRIET

(*Horrified.*)

Show them in!

DOCTOR

Don't be afraid. We'll take care of them.

(*They ad lib as they exit quickly - U-L-C-.*)

PETER

Oh, why did I do it! I'm a fool! I'm a fool!

(*Takes Diantha's picture from frame on mantel.*)

Oh, you'll never forgive me! Never! And I deserve it!

(*Puts photo into pocket, sees basket, reaches for it, pulls it across table, opens it, slowly takes cap out, looks at it.*)

Oh, such a little woman! Such a little woman!

(*Takes out tiny boots.*)

Ah! Look at 'em! Look at 'em! And I've got to give her up — I've got to go!

(*Chooses between boots and cap, decides on cap, puts it into outer pocket of coat, puts boots back, closes basket, takes key, goes up -R-.*)

Oh, I can't bear to lose her! I can't!

(*Goes to 'phone.*)

Beekman four, o, three, one — yes.

(*Mimics Fetter's voice.*)

Is this the office of Colonel Avery? Well, this is Fetter, Miss Connaughton's butler. Miss Connaughton instructs me to say that she will not trouble Colonel Avery to come. There is no occasion for it.

(*Startled.*)

WHAT?

(*Closes 'phone, rises.*)

Oh!

(*Sam enters - U-L-C-, evading Hans, closes both sets of doors.*)

SAM

You know, Peter,—

(*Peter turns.*)

this is a particularly charming house.

PETER

Oh! So you're GLAD you're a captive in it?

SAM

Well, I must say I've enjoyed this opportunity of seeing it — personally conducted by the furnace-man.

PETER

Mm! Then you'll enjoy hearing that that Doctor is up to something. I don't know what it is, but she's going to make trouble.

SAM

We're all fellow sufferers with her.

PETER

And I'm to get my punishment for coming here.

SAM

Don't call it punishment, my boy. Let's speak of it as reformation, or, better still, convalescence.

PETER

No! We'll call it punishment. These ladies have been annoyed and worried and hurt. Well, I'm going to stand up and take MY medicine. And you're going to take some, too.

SAM

(*Angry.*)

You think I deserve it?

PETER

Just a minute. You had no right to do anything to me that would frighten them. Well, this "stunt" will cost you your position with Lawrence & Avery.

SAM

Oh, that doesn't worry me. You don't dare to tell Colonel Avery what YOU'VE done.

PETER

I won't HAVE to!

SAM

No?

PETER

No. Because he's coming.

(*Goes -L-.*)

SAM

Here?

PETER

(*Halts.*)

Right now! To find out about the deaf and dumb gang.

SAM

Good-bye.

(*Xes to French windows and tries them.*)

How'll I get out?

PETER

You don't get out.

(*Exits -L-.*)

(*As Sam stands turning from side to side in consternation, Harriet shows Colonel in- U-L-C- and exits.*)

COLONEL

Why, Samuel!

SAM

Oh! — er — Colonel.

COLONEL

I didn't know you were coming to attend to this matter.

SAM

And I didn't know that YOU were. Do you think we'll both be needed?

COLONEL

Well, — er — I think I'd like to take charge of it.

SAM

Then I might as well run along. Good-bye, sir.

COLONEL

Good-bye.

(*Sam faces up stage, hesitates, takes resolute start. At door -L-C- meets Hans and wilts. Exits toward -R-, followed by Hans.*)

(*Auntie enters* at *-L-*, comes *-C-*.)

(*Colonel turns.*)

Miss Connaughton!

AUNTIE

Oh, Colonel! Won't you sit down?

COLONEL

(*Fixes chair -L- of table -R-. Auntie takes it.*)

It seems just right to — to see you here!

(*Looks up and around room.*)

AUNTIE

I — I remember.

(*Fans self.*)

COLONEL

And — all these years — I've carried the picture of it — and the picture of a gentle girl —

(*Bows gallantly.*)

AUNTIE

(*Embarrassed.*)

I telephoned —

COLONEL

Oh, yes. About some men.

AUNTIE

We — we hesitated to, but we're just a little bit nervous.

COLONEL

I'm sorry; tell me.

AUNTIE

Well, it began yesterday. Two deaf and dumb men called —

COLONEL

(*Astonished.*)

Upon the escort?

AUNTIE

(*Assents.*)

Today, two more!

COLONEL

(*Displeased.*)

I'll SEE about that!

AUNTIE

One is here now!

COLONEL

May I see him — AND the escort?

AUNTIE

(*Rises.*)

Certainly!

(*Rings - U-L-C-.*)

COLONEL

(*Xes -L-.*)

This is the old, old desk.

AUNTIE

(*-C-.*)

Yes!

COLONEL

(*Turns, comes -L-.*)

And these are the books we read — together.

AUNTIE

(*Nods.*)

Some of them.

(*-L- of table -R-.*)

COLONEL

(*Stands -C-.*)

And we read them at this same hearth!

(*Auntie turns away -R-, sighs.*)

Ah! Those were very happy times — Lavinia!

AUNTIE

(*Softly.*)

Very!

COLONEL

Then you haven't forgotten them either?

(*Goes toward her, but stops as Harriet enters - U-L-C-.*)

AUNTIE

(*To Harriet.*)

Find Mr. McVicar and his friend, and bring them here.

HARRIET

Yes, Madam. And — Fetter just called up. Oh, Madam, he wants to know how he's going to get his supper!

AUNTIE

I'll speak to him!

(*Harriet exits - U-L-C-. Auntie, to Colonel.*)

Will you excuse me?

(*Colonel bows. Auntie goes up, turns, smiles, curtsies, exits - U-C- to -L-. Colonel bows to her, again looks about room, smiling, Xes -R-, puts hat and cane on table.*)

(*Peter enters -L-, looking behind him, closes door, then closes sliding doors.*)

PETER

(*Stage whisper.*)

Uncle !

(*Xes to -C-.*)

COLONEL

My boy !

(*Xes to Peter.*)

PETER

Ssh !

COLONEL

Oh, I've worried !

PETER

Uncle, don't be shocked !

COLONEL

(*Falls back.*)

You're in trouble !

PETER

I'm the deaf and dumb escort.

COLONEL

You !

PETER

But they don't know I'm Peter Avery !

COLONEL

Do you mean to tell me that you've hoaxed this household ?

PETER

Uncle, I know how it looks, but —

COLONEL

Peter Avery, this is the most outrageous thing I've ever heard of !

PETER

(*Appealingly.*)

But, Uncle, do you remember YOUR suggestion?

COLONEL

My suggestion?

PETER

Discipline!

COLONEL

You shall have it, sir!

(*Starts for bell.*)

PETER

(*Checks him.*)

Oh, wait! That wasn't all!

(*Colonel halts.*)

I wanted a job. And then I saw HER! Oh, Uncle, I wanted to be near her. I love her! I love her!

COLONEL

But, sir, you are deaf and dumb!

PETER

I can learn to speak! I can get back my hearing!

COLONEL

No! You are going to confess that you're a cheat.

(*Starts for bell.*)

PETER

(*Checks him.*)

Oh, she hates fraud and deception!

COLONEL

So much the worse for you!

PETER

But she'll never let me see her again! You don't know her high ideals — about men!

COLONEL

I DO know! And I want to ask you, sir, are YOU fit to be the father of her seven lovely children?

PETER

(*Resignation.*)

You're right, Uncle. I deserve to lose out. But I hoped you'd give me a chance to resign — if only for your own sake.

COLONEL

(*Resentfully.*)

MY sake?

PETER

(*With meaning.*)

Miss Connaughton!

COLONEL

(*Embarrassed; weakens.*)

Um — ah! You mean —?

PETER

A woman cares when she treasures a man's photograph twenty years. But, now! Well, I'm your nephew, and Miss Connaughton won't understand what I've done. We'll BOTH be disgraced!

(*Xes down -R-.*)

(*Auntie enters and comes down to -L- of Colonel. She looks inquiringly from Colonel to Peter and back again. Pause. Colonel avoids looking at Auntie. He seems undecided between two courses.*)

COLONEL

Miss Connaughton, I have inspected this deaf and dumb escort.

AUNTIE

(*Eagerly*; *shields lips with fan.*)

And you think —?

COLONEL

There is no reason to be frightened in the matter.

AUNTIE

(*Relieved.*)

Ah!

COLONEL

But I strongly urge that you dismiss him. As he came from my office, I am sorry that he has disappointed you. I assure you, he has disappointed me!

AUNTIE

(*Behind her fan.*)

He looks like a gentleman.

COLONEL

(*Suddenly wrathful.*)

A gentleman? You say he had callers yesterday and today. Does a gentleman accept the hospitality of a lady's home, and then encourage the intrusion of rascally associates?

(*Looks Peter up and down.*)

AUNTIE

(*Behind fan.*)

Careful! He'll read your lips.

COLONEL

(*Turns to Auntie.*)

He'll WHAT?

(*Peter turns -R- sadly.*)

AUNTIE

(*Gently.*)

He'll understand, and be hurt!

COLONEL

Miss Connaughton, I intend to MAKE him understand.

(*Turns -R-.*)

(*Peter faces him.*)

I don't like his actions in this house. I don't like his looks. And I shall see that he never enters my office again.

(*Turns up stage as Devol enters - U-L-C-.*)

DEVOL

Ah, Colonel Avery.

(*Bows.*)

(*Peter turns -R- again, disconsolately.*)

AUNTIE

(*To Colonel.*)

You remember Mr. Devol?

COLONEL

Oh, yes,— yes, of course.

DEVOL

How do you do, Colonel.

(*Shakes hands heartily.*)

COLONEL

It's a pleasure to see you again !

(*Devol comes down to table-R-.*) (*Colonel to Auntie.*)

This man understands that he must go.

(*Indicates Peter.*)

DEVOL

(*Pleased.*)

Ah !

(*Puts hat on table.*)

COLONEL

(*To Auntie.*)

And I want you to realize how keenly I regret his being here. I — I — oh, I can't even SPEAK of it !

(*Exits - U-L-C-.*)

(*Auntie watches him go, sighs, comes down.*)

DEVOL

The escort is unsatisfactory ?

AUNTIE

(*Sadly.*)

So it seems !

DEVOL

I felt sure there was something wrong with him.

(*Takes out report.*)

Well, I have the names of the poor wretches made homeless by that fire. And I've investigated several of the cases.

(*Comes -C-.*)

AUNTIE

But I can't attend to that now. I must see Diantha about dismissing the escort.

(*Starts -L-.*)

DEVOL

But, Miss Connaughton! SURELY this fellow's going can't be as urgent as this.

(*Holds up report.*)

AUNTIE

(*Comes back.*)

But you've attended to their immediate wants — food, and shelter?

DEVOL

Oh, yes. But the sum you gave me didn't go half way round. And the situation is still heartrending.

AUNTIE

(*Turns back.*)

What sum WOULD relieve the suffering?

DEVOL

Well, I should say about a thousand dollars.

AUNTIE

A thousand!

DEVOL

Well,— er — a rough estimate. Poor creatures! They're without clothes.

AUNTIE

I'll give you a check for eight hundred.

(*Goes -L- to desk.*)

DEVOL

(*Shows covert disappointment.*)

Ah, you're a generous lady.

AUNTIE

Oh, no. I must help others.

(*Opens check book, sits.*)

DEVOL

But how many women would be so kind! And I know you'll want to hear about one family that you'll make very happy.

AUNTIE

(*Dips pen in ink.*)

Yes?

DEVOL

The McCarty's — they lost everything. But so cheerful and brave about it all. And they have seven fine little children.

AUNTIE

(*Struck with sudden idea, puts down pen, rises.*)

Wouldn't Diantha like to hear about them! Wait!

(*Xes -L-, halts.*)

You have their address, of course?

DEVOL

Oh, yes, indeed!

AUNTIE

We'll give Diantha the pleasure of going down to help the McCarty's!

(*Exits -L-, closing door.*)

DEVOL

(*Manner instantly changes.*)

Damnation!

(*Xes to Peter, looks over his shoulder, goes to 'phone.*)

Hello! Hello! Give me Bryant nine-o-four. Yes.

(*Watches doors.*)

Hello! Hello! Oh, is that you, Percy? Well, I didn't do as well as I'd like to, but I get eight hundred. Yes. Hold that fellow there, will you? I'll be down in half an hour.

(*Looks around cautiously.*)

But, listen! The old party wants MISS DIANTHA to attend to the giving of the money.

(*Laughs.*)

Yes, — personally. Well, either the game is all over, or we've got to dig up some deserving McCartys!

(*Peter starts.*)

Yes! Well, I think we can manage it. Ha! Ha! I'll put the little dear off a day or two! So long!

(*Devol faces -L- as Auntie enters at -L- followed by Diantha, who has on hat and coat. Diantha's manner is sweetly sorrowful.*)

(*Peter rises. Devol puts down 'phone. Auntie goes to old desk, writes check. Devol starts -L- to -C-, halts. Peter moves to foot of library table, halts, keeps eye on Devol. Devol is taken aback at sight of Diantha's hat and coat.*)

Ah, Miss Diantha!

DIANTHA

I am ready.

DEVOL

Ah, yes, ready. And such a splendid idea — your going with me to help those poor McCartys.

DIANTHA

Oh, I'm only too glad. Think of their having seven little ones!

(*Auntie rises, check in hand.*)

(*During the following scene Peter keeps his eye on the check.*)

DEVOL

(*Face lights up, half reaches for check.*)

Yes, — the check.

DIANTHA

(*Takes check from Auntie. To Devol.*)

Come, let us start.

DEVOL

(*Eyes on the check.*)

But — er — I'm afraid I can't go with you TODAY!

DIANTHA

Oh!

DEVOL

No.

(*Takes check.*)

Beg pardon. Yes, made out to me.

(*To Auntie.*)

Thank you, dear lady!

(*Puts check in pocket.*)

You see there are one or two other matters that I really must not neglect.

(*Begins to edge up -L-C-. Peter slowly follows him. Devol halts as Philip and Thad enter - U-L-C-. Harriet is in front of them. Philip wears a moustache. Devol falls back toward Peter.*)

HARRIET

Oh, Madam!

(*Philip and Thad begin conversation on fingers.*)
(*Diantha and Auntie give way toward -L-.*)

DEVOL

(*Angrily.*)

What is the meaning of this?

(*Sam appears through door -L- followed by Hans.*)

(*Patrolman Hayes appears in door - U-L-C- with Doctor.*)

DOCTOR

(*To Hayes.*)

Here they are!

DEVOL

(*Sees Hayes.*)

Oh, splendid!

DIANTHA

Doctor!

AUNTIE

(*To Devol.*)

But the disgrace!

DEVOL

(*To Hayes.*)

The nick of time! Arrest these men!

(*Indicates Philip and Thad.*)

(*Hayes seizes Philip and Thad, leads them off - U-L-C-.*)

HAYES

Come along!

AUNTIE

Oh, not the police station!

DEVOL

Hans!

(*Motions him to take Sam.*)

HANS

Ja! Ja!

(*Drags Sam off - U-L-C- behind Thad and Phil.*)

DOCTOR

(*To Devol.*)

But the escort!

AUNTIE

Oh, no, no!

DEVOL

Ha! The escort!

(*Proudly.*)

Leave him to ME!

(*Grabs Peter by arm.*)

Come along, you!

DIANTHA

He hasn't done anything!

(*Peter grins -R-. Pretends to resist.*)

AUNTIE

Oh, don't! Don't!

DEVOL

There's a plot to rob you! But it shall fail, Miss Connaughton! It shall fail! Fail!

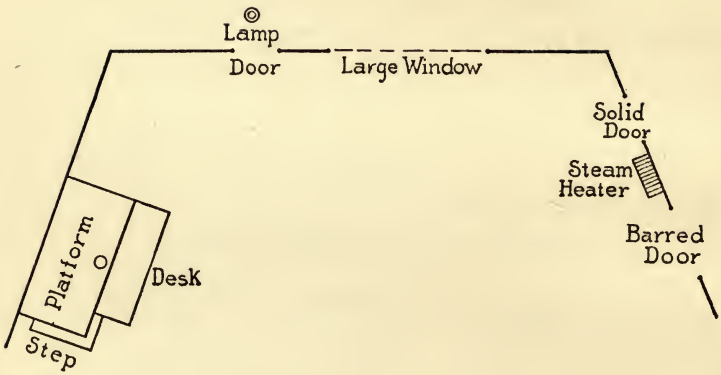
(*Drags Peter off -U-L-C-. Peter resisting and grinning.*)

(*Doctor and Diantha follow.*)

CURTAIN

ACT III

DIAGRAM OF SET



ABBREVIATIONS:

X—To cross.
C—Center.
R—Right.
L—Left.
L C—Left center.
R C—Right center.
U R C—Up right center.
U L C—Up left center.

R 1 E—Right first entrance.
R 2 E—Right second entrance.
R 3 E—Right third entrance.
L 1 E—Left first entrance (barred door).
L 2 E—Left second entrance.
L 3 E—Left third entrance (solid door).

ACT III

The set is the "office" or "muster-room" of a police station. In the rear flat at -C- is a wide, high, large-paned window, over which is drawn a big, light-colored shade. Upon this shade the shadows of passers-by in the street are thrown distinctly.

At -R-C- is the street door. When this is open, a green police lamp is seen, lighting a characteristic bit of street. The sidewalk is but a few inches below the level of the floor of the police station. On the walls of the room hang a district map, a precinct map, and a three-platoon map.

Down -R-, set parallel to the -R- wall, is the usual long, large desk. This desk is nearly shoulder high, and is set out several feet from the wall. Between the desk and the wall is a wide platform. On the platform is a chair. At the down-stage end of the desk is a step leading up to the platform. Hanging on the wall behind the desk is a large map of the city of New York. On the desk are a hooded reading light, a telephone, a telephone directory, the police "blotter," ink, paper, etc.

There is a narrow solid door at -L-3-E-. At -L-I-E- is a wide door which is "dramatic" in its construction. It consists of a heavy iron "grille" to suggest the cells beyond. Between the two doors at -L- is a steam-heater. The room is lighted by a chandelier. There is a wall-clock on the rear flat between the wide window and the street door.

Before the curtain rises, Lieutenant Sheehan is heard singing "The County Mayo."

"'Tis my grief that Patrick Loughlin
Is not Earl of Errol still,
And that Brian Duff no longer
Rules as Lord upon the hill,
And that Colonel John O'Grady —"

As the curtain rises, Sheehan is discovered seated behind the desk down -R-. He is a big young man with a close-cropped head. He is leaning back in his chair, facing front. The adjustable light is directed upon his shoes, which are being polished by the Bootblack, a boy about ten years of age. The boy has his back to the audience, and is working energetically. Costume is characteristic. His shirt sleeves are cut off at the elbow.

LIEUTENANT

(*Still singing.*)

"Should be lying dead and low
And I sailing, sailing swiftly
From the County of —"

(*Breaks off song.*)

Ouch!

(*Draws up right foot and nurses it.*)

BOOTBLACK

(*Sits back and looks up.*)

It's going to rain, that's why!

(*Three figures are silhouetted on window, Xing -R-.*)

LIEUTENANT

(*Puts foot down gingerly.*)

Oo-oo!

(*Offers other.*)

Now try this one, and don't tear me shoe off.

(*Bootblack works more slowly. Sheehan rubs right leg.*)

It hurts all up me side.

(*Door -U-R-C- opens, enter Patrolman Keith with Henry and Fetter, who are disheveled and tired.*)

KEITH

(*To Henry, who is observant and cautious.*)

Come on now! Come ahead!

(*Leads Henry down to desk. Fetter follows.*)

LIEUTENANT

Well, Keith?

KEITH

(*Salutes.*)

Lieutenant!

LIEUTENANT

What you got?

(*Directs light on the trio.*)

KEITH

Well, I don't know, Lieutenant.

(*Indicates Henry.*)

He seems to be some kind of a suspicious char-*ac*-ter.

LIEUTENANT

So!

FETTER

(*To Lieutenant.*)

Indeed he is, sir. He's very suspicious, sir.

LIEUTENANT

(*To Henry.*)

Well, young man, what have you got to say for yourself?

(*Henry ignores question.*)

KEITH

He's deaf and dumb, Lieutenant.

(*The Bootblack sits back and stares.*)

LIEUTENANT

A dummy? Well!

(*To Bootblack, giving him coin.*)

Here, kid! Clear out! Run along now — beat it!

(*Bootblack goes up slowly, watching back, exits - U-R-C.*)

(*To Fetter.*)

Well, what do YOU know about him?

FETTER

His name is Smith, sir, and —

LIEUTENANT

Smith!

(*Gives Keith a smile, draws book to himself and picks up pen.*)

We git lots of Smiths here.

(*Writes.*)

(*Henry peers over to see what Lieutenant is writing, smiles.*)

FETTER

Yes, sir. And he claims to come from Alaska.

LIEUTENANT

(*Looks up.*)

Alaska!

(*Writes.*)

Well, we git 'em from there, too.

(*Sits back.*)

FETTER

He called on a gentleman who's employed where I am.

LIEUTENANT

And where's that?

FETTER

Well, — er — would the case get into the newspapers?

LIEUTENANT

It's likely. We don't protect law-breakers.

FETTER

Then I — I think I'd rather not give the name, sir.

LIEUTENANT

(*Irritable.*)

But what's he done? What's he done?

FETTER

He's the THIRD deaf and dumb man that's called.

(*Henry grins to front.*)

So I was told to follow him. And, oh, what a chase!

LIEUTENANT

(*Holds out pad and pencil to Henry.*)

Here! Tell about yourself.

(*Keith pulls Henry about by arm.*)

Yes, write it down — write it.

(*To Fetter, as Henry hesitates.*)

But I can't hold him without a complaint. And I can't keep him just for payin' an afternoon call. So if he don't confess something —

(*Henry writes rapidly.*)

It's all off!

(*Henry hands pad to Lieutenant.*)

Well, let's see what he's got to say!

(*Looks at Henry's writing, jerks back, turns pad upside down, then sideways. Hands pad to Keith.*)

Good Lord! What kind of stuff is this?

(*Henry looks amused and confident.*)

KEITH

It looks like you could SING it!

LIEUTENANT

I guess we'd better hold him for the interpreter.

(*To Keith.*)

Put him inside!

(*Jerks thumb -L-I-E-. 'Phone bus.*)

Hello, Headquarters!

KEITH

(*Takes Henry by sleeve.*)

Come on!

(*Leads him -L-.*)

(*Henry hangs back so he can hear.*)

Come on! Come on!

LIEUTENANT

(*Into 'phone.*)

Headquarters, this is Sheehan. Is Farley there? Well, we've got a finger-twister up here —

(*Henry grins.*)

Yes. And I'd like you to send Farley right away. Good-bye.

(*Closes 'phone.*)

KEITH

(*Irritably.*)

Come on! Come on!

(*Jerks Henry -L-.*)

LIEUTENANT

Wait !

(*Henry and Keith pause.*)

You'd better see what he's got on him.

(*Rises, comes down step.*)

KEITH

(*To Henry.*)

Come over here.

(*Brings him -C- to desk. Lieutenant joins them. Lieut. goes through Henry's vest pockets. Keith feels in outer coat pockets.*)

Nothing !

(*Shows handkerchief, keys and purse.*)

LIEUTENANT

See here !

(*Takes paper money and checks from inner coat pocket.*)

Look at the checks ! Colonel Robert Avery — Lawrence & Avery — Lawrence & Avery — Robert Avery !

KEITH

(*Looks at money.*)

What a roll !

LIEUTENANT

Well, me boy, you done pretty well.

(*To Keith.*)

Put him inside !

(*Returns to chair.*)

KEITH

Come on !

(*Henry goes unwillingly; they exit -L-I-E-.*)

(*Lieutenant opens book.*)

(*Two shadows appear on the window - U-C-, going -R-. One is the Newsboy, the other the Tagger.*)

FETTER

Shall I — wait?

LIEUTENANT

(*Jerks head -L-.*)

In there —

(*Fetter looks at door -L-I-E- nervously.*)

In there!

(*Points -L-3-E-.*)

(*Newsboy looks in at street door.*)

FETTER

(*Relieved.*)

Thank you, sir.

(*Goes -L-.*)

LIEUTENANT

(*To Newsboy.*)

Hey, Kiddie!

NEWSBOY

(*Enters - U-R-C-.*)

All right!

LIEUTENANT

(*To Fetter.*)

But, listen! If you don't make a charge, I can't hold him.

(*Fetter exits -L-3-E-.*)

(*Newsboy comes to desk with papers. Tagger follows. He is smaller and is sucking his thumb.*)

Give me a couple.

(*Into 'phone.*)

Plaza nine-nine-one.

NEWSBOY

(*Hands Lieutenant papers.*)

Here you are!

(*Shadows of Peter, Diantha and others appear on window.*)

LIEUTENANT

Who's your friend?

(*Indicates the Tagger.*)

NEWSBOY

Oh, that's me Tagger; he's learnin' the business.

LIEUTENANT

(*To Tagger.*)

Well, business men don't suck their thumbs.

(*Gives Newsboy coin. Into 'phone.*)

Hello — Plaza nine-nine-one? Here! Halve it with your pardner!

(*Throws apple. Newsboy catches it.*)

Hello! Colonel Avery's residence? It is? Well, tell him to step over to the Police Station — POLICE STATION! Yes, — we've got a man here he'll want to see. He's deef and dumb.

(*Newsboy divides apple with Tagger. They look at Map on wall under clock. As they turn* -R-, *the door* -R-C- *opens and Devol enters with Peter. Behind them are Phil and Thad in charge of Hayes, then Sam in charge of Hans. The Doctor and Diantha come last. Diantha has a handkerchief in one hand. During the following scene Hans does not take his look off Sam, and follows his every move. Keith enters at* -L-I-E-. *Devol leads Peter down* -L- *of desk. The others follow.*)

Well, Hayes?

HAYES

(*Salutes.*)

Lieutenant!

DEVOL

(*Triumphantly. To Peter.*)

Here, you rascal!

LIEUTENANT

What's all this? A Movin' Picture Show?

DEVOL

(*To Lieutenant. Proudly.*)

Officer, I place in your hands what I believe to be a dangerous criminal.

(*Indicates Peter.*)

LIEUTENANT

O — o — h!

DEVOL

This man has been plotting against a trusting lady. He has played upon the kindness of her woman's heart. While a member of her household, while he ate and drank at her table, he abetted the intrusion of rascally confederates.

(*Indicates Sam, Phil and Thad.*)

But he failed to reckon, sir, with me.

(*Taps chest.*)

LIEUTENANT

(*Patiently.*)

Go on!

DEVOL

What is more dastardly than an outrage on hospitality? And I ask you to give them the extreme penalty for such an offense! This is no time to deal in soft clemency. A home is in danger! I want them put under lock and key.

LIEUTENANT

Wait! Wait! Let's find out what they've DONE!

DEVOL

Done? But haven't I just TOLD you? Do you doubt the word of a gentleman? Is it your intention to shield these wretches? Let me tell you, sir, it is your duty to PROTECT the citizens of this city from such ruffians. It is your duty —

LIEUTENANT

Now look here! Don't you be tryin' to tell me what's me DUTY.

DEVOL

Indeed, I shall — you're a servant of the people. And your attitude in this matter is outrageous, sir! Perfectly outrageous!

LIEUTENANT

It is. But get your breath!

DEVOL

And I'll report you, sir. I'm well known socially. I have powerful friends.

(*Threatens Lieutenant with his silk hat.*)

And I'll have you dismissed from the force.

LIEUTENANT

(*Rises, leans across desk, points into Devol's face.*)

Now, that'll do for you!

DEVOL

But I repeat that I —

LIEUTENANT

Another word, and I'll slam YOU in a cell.

DEVOL

Oh!

(*Falls back a step.*)

This is unheard-of!

LIEUTENANT

Yes. You high society fresh!

(*Settles back into his chair.*)

Just because you got a silk hat on, you ain't PO-lice Commissioner.

(*To others.*)

Well, young fellers, what've you got to say for yourselves?

HAYES

Lieutenant, they're all deef and dumb!

LIEUTENANT

Deef and —! Well, this seems to be my deef and dumb evenin'. Do you know who they are?

HAYES

This lady knows all about them.

DOCTOR

(*Indicates Peter.*)

Only this one.

(*Diantha comes -R-.*)

HAYES

The leader of the gang!

LIEUTENANT

I suppose HIS name is Jones?

DIANTHA

Oh, no! He's Mr. John McVicar!

LIEUTENANT

So-o-o? And the others?

DIANTHA

That's what WE want to find out.

DOCTOR

(*Angrily.*)

We do!

LIEUTENANT

Well, they're sure to be Brown, Robinson and White.

DIANTHA

(*To Peter; face close.*)

YOU tell him who they are!

LIEUTENANT

I thought he was deef and dumb?

DIANTHA

He reads the lips!

LIEUTENANT

He reads the — ! Oh, I see! Well, young lady, suppose you tell us what YOU know!

DIANTHA

(*Tearfully.*)

Oh! The whole thing is MY fault!

DOCTOR

(*Comfortingly.*)

Nonsense, Diantha!

(*Peter edges toward her.*)

LIEUTENANT

There! There! Just start from the beginnin', and let's near the whole trouble.

DIANTHA

Well, you see, I am deeply interested in the phenomena of social evolution, and —

LIEUTENANT

In the WHAT?

DIANTHA

Oh, you know — among the emigrants on the East Side.

LIEUTENANT

Oh! Sittlements!

DIANTHA

Well, something like that!

LIEUTENANT

Deef and DUMB sittlements?

DIANTHA

Oh, no!

(*Declamatory.*)

I study the effect of alien immigration upon the Metropolitan Body Politic!

LIEUTENANT

Yes, I know! I know! But we've no time for a lecture. Now, who's this McVicar?

DIANTHA

He's my escort.

(*Farley's shadow Xes -R- on window.*)

LIEUTENANT

But do you know what he does for a LIVING?

DIANTHA

He escorts me

LIEUTENANT

And he takes money for THAT?

(*Laughs, shakes head.*)

(*Farley enters -R-C-. He is a slim young man, and wears his derby slightly to one side.*)

Hello, Farley!

FARLEY

(*Salutes.*)

Evening, Lieutenant!

(*Xes -R-.*)

LIEUTENANT

(*To Farley, indicating Peter.*)

See what you can get out of this dummy.

(*Sam, Thad and Philip are delighted.*)

(*Farley goes to Peter, talks to him correctly on fingers. Peter watches him, then turns head away. Farley turns him around, repeats bus. Peter replies feebly. Farley stares, turns to Lieutenant.*)

FARLEY

I don't understand him.

(*Tries again.*)

(*Peter replies boldly.*)

(*Farley throws up his hands.*)

He's a fake!

DIANTHA

(*To Lieutenant.*)

Oh, please!

(*To Farley.*)

You see, the trouble is, he uses a different system!

LIEUTENANT

Oh!

FARLEY

Well, what is his system?

(*Gives Lieutenant wink.*)

DIANTHA

The Bertillon!

(*Lieutenant, Keith, Hayes and Farley laugh.*)

DOCTOR

(*Half laughing.*)

Why, Diantha!

(*Sam, Philip and Thad conceal laughter.*)

LIEUTENANT

The — WHAT?

(*Farley laughs derisively.*)

DIANTHA

The Bertillon system.

FARLEY

Well!

LIEUTENANT

That's the system that goes here!

FARLEY

(*Gets behind Peter. To Lieutenant.*)

Shall I look him over?

(*Peter starts, shows fear, claps hand over right breast pocket. Sam, Thad and Philip are pleased.*)

DEVOL

Ah — ha!

LIEUTENANT

He's got something!

FARLEY

Didn't I tell you?

DOCTOR

I was afraid of it!

DIANTHA

(*Protesting.*)

Oh, but, Doctor — !

(*Doctor draws Diantha to her as Farley puts hand into Peter's inside breast pocket.*)

DEVOL

I thought so!

FARLEY

(*Takes picture out of Peter's inside coat pocket.*)

A girl!

(*Hands photo to Lieutenant.*)

DIANTHA

Girl!

(*Hides face against Doctor's shoulder.*)

LIEUTENANT

(*Looks at photo, then at Diantha.*)

Miss! Oh, Miss!

(*Diantha turns.*)

Just a bit. I think you can identify this

DIANTHA

(*Goes to take photo, looks at it.*)

Oh!

LIEUTENANT

(*Taking photo back. Teasingly.*)

That'll do. That'll do.

(*Peter puts hand on outer pocket.*)

FARLEY

Cut that!

(*Jerks Peter's hand away, puts own hand in and draws out baby cap.*)

DOCTOR

Oh!

DIANTHA

It's Hope's!

(*Seizes cap, puts it under wrap and hides face on Doctor's shoulder.*)

HAYES

(*Excitedly, indicating Philip.*)

This one's got a false moustache?

LIEUTENANT

(*Rises.*)

What's THAT?

PHILIP

(*As Hayes takes hold of moustache and pulls one side away.*)

Here! Stop it!

(*Chorus of Doctor, Lieutenant, Farley, Hayes and Keith, exclaim in surprise. "Oh! Well! Talks! Fake!" etc., etc.*)

DEVOL

(*Slightly apprehensive.*)

My word!

(*Diantha looks up.*)

LIEUTENANT

(*Angry.*)

Say, what kind of a game are you givin' us?

(*Xes down to front of Philip.*)

HAYES

He never cheeped till now.

LIEUTENANT

(*To Phil.*)

Here you! What does this mean?

SAM

Let ME explain, Lieutenant. You see —

HANS

Ach, Gott!

(*Devol shows increasing uneasiness.*)

LIEUTENANT

(*More angry.*)

So you can talk, too?

THAD

There's a good reason for this —

(*Devol looks at Peter, backs a step.*)

LIEUTENANT

Just hold on! If you think a bunch of you young smarties can come in here and pull any of them rotten college jokes on me or my men, you're mistaken. Hayes! Keith!

(*The patrolmen each seize a man.*)

THAD

But, wait!

PHILIP

Listen!

SAM

One minute!

LIEUTENANT

Not a word from any of you!

(*To patrolmen.*)

Clear 'em out of here!

(*The patrolmen pull Sam, Thad and Philip -L-.*)

Give 'em a room apiece. Lock 'em up.

(*Goes -L- behind them.*)

SAM

Wait!

PHILIP

No!

THAD

Please!

(*They exit with patrolmen -L-I-E-. Sam is last. Hans goes -L-. Door -L-I-E- is slammed in his face. He remains at it, peering in after Sam.*

LIEUTENANT

(*Calls.*)

And just leave 'em in there till mornin' !

(*Chorus of protests from Sam, Thad and Phil.*)

(*Doctor and Diantha look after men, at each other, at Peter. Lieutenant turns, looks at Peter.*)

DIANTHA

(*Comes down.*)

Oh, how cruel. They've been trying to worry him — to interfere with his work !

(*Shadows of Harriet and Auntie cross window, going -R-.*)

DEVOL

(*Goes -L-. Peter follows him. To Lieutenant, apologetically.*)

It's plain that I was mistaken.

(*Nervous look at Peter.*)

As you say, it's one of those little college jokes. And I regret my error very much. I'm sorry I was so heated in my remarks. I trust you'll excuse me.

DIANTHA

(*To Lieutenant.*)

I hope you won't. Nobody asked him to bring these gentlemen here.

DOCTOR

Now, Diantha !

DIANTHA

(*To Lieutenant.*)

Such presumption ! Such high-handed impudence !

(*To Devol.*)

You had no RIGHT — you doodle-bug !

DEVOL

(*To Lieutenant.*)

I'm Miss Connaughton's private secretary. I'm her trusted friend. And so —

AUNTIE

(*Entering - U-R-C-.*)

Doctor ! Diantha !

DIANTHA

Auntie !

DEVOL

Oh, Miss Connaughton. I'm so glad you've come !

(*To Lieutenant.*)

Lieutenant, these gentlemen were arrested in this lady's house, and she will assure you that I had her best interests at heart.

(*To Auntie.*)

Dear lady, it appears that I was wrong. My sincere apologies to — to everyone.

(*Looks pointedly at Peter.*)

(*Peter stays between Devol and street door.*)

AUNTIE

(*To Devol.*)

But you meant well.

(*To Lieutenant.*)

Mr. Devol is untiring in my behalf. If he's been unjust, it was for my sake.

(*Turns to Devol with a smile, puts out hand.*)

DEVOL

(*Takes her hand, kisses it.*)

Ah, dear lady, thank you !

(*To Lieutenant.*)

And have I your forgiveness?

LIEUTENANT

Well, as long as you was fightin' for the lady —

(*Bland smile; Xes to desk.*)

DEVOL

(*To Lieutenant.*)

Oh, thank you, Lieutenant.

(*To Auntie.*)

And thank you, dear lady.

AUNTIE

No, — thank YOU !

DEVOL

And now I'm afraid I must go. Sorry to leave you like this, but I've been so delayed —

(*To Diantha.*)

Good-bye, Miss Kerr.

(*Diantha does not answer.*)

Good-bye, Doctor.

DOCTOR

Good-bye !

PETER

(*Blocks Devol's way.*)

Just a minute!

(*Auntie, Doctor, Diantha, Devol, Farley — speak at once.*)

DEVOL

(*In terror.*)

My —!

AUNTIE

(*Frightened.*)

Oh !

DOCTOR

What!

DIANTHA

(*Amazed.*)

Why —!

FARLEY

(*Pleased.*)

I knew it!

DEVOL

(*To Peter; prostrates himself.*)

Oh, you won't be hard on me! You won't tell! I'll never do it again! Oh, I won't! I won't!

LIEUTENANT

That'll do!

(*Peter steps back from Devol.*)

(*To Peter.*)

What's he been up to?

PETER

He's been getting money from Miss Connaughton for poor families that never existed!

AUNTIE

Oh, Diantha!

DIANTHA

(*Puts arms about her.*)

Why, Auntie!

DEVOL

(*To Auntie.*)

Oh, forgive me! Forgive me! But my poor brother! He gambled, Miss Connaughton, and I had to shield him — to save him from disgrace. That's how it began.

(*Colonel Avery passes window from -L- to -R-.*)

LIEUTENANT

(*To Hayes.*)

Number Five!

DEVOL

Oh, don't lock me up! Oh, my family honor! My pride!

AUNTIE

(*Draws back.*)

Please go!

DIANTHA

(*Protesting.*)

But, Auntie —!

AUNTIE

(*To Lieutenant.*)

It would mean publicity!

LIEUTENANT

But don't you want to make a charge agin him?

AUNTIE

No!

DEVOL

Oh, thank you, dear lady! Thank —!

LIEUTENANT

It's a shame!

AUNTIE

Then there aren't any deserving McCartys?

DEVOL

No doubt there are — no doubt —

LIEUTENANT

Git!

DEVOL

Yes! Yes! I will! I'll never do wrong again. Never! Oh!

(*Starts - U-R-.*)

PETER

(*Halts him with pointing finger.*)

Where's that check?

DEVOL

Oh, I've got it, haven't I? Yes, yes.

(*Takes it out of pocket, hands it to Peter.*)

Here!

(*Peter takes check.*)

(*As Devol is about to exit - U-R-C-, Colonel Avery enters. They collide.*)

Oh, excuse me! Excuse me!

COLONEL

I beg your pardon. My fault.

(*Devol exits, showing comedy shadow on window.*)

(*Colonel comes down.*)

WELL! You young rascal!

(*To Auntie.*)

Oh, how can I ever apologize to you! It's outrageous! And this nephew of mine shall make amends for —

AUNTIE

Nephew?

(*Peter hands Auntie the check.*)

DIANTHA

Oh!

DOCTOR

WHAT?

COLONEL

(*To Peter.*)

Why do you do these things? You're the only one in my employ who seems fairly possessed with mischief.

PETER

Uncle!

LIEUTENANT

Keith!

(*Signals Keith.*)

Bring in the bunch.

(*Keith exits -L-I-E-.*)

COLONEL

(*To Auntie.*)

This explains my conduct today. My whole office has been upset. Not a man was able to work —

(*At Peter.*)

But why can't he attend to business? Why can't he be like the other boys?

(*Thad, Philip and Sam enter -L-I-E- and halt in line. Hans follows Sam. Colonel stares at the three.*)

Why! Why!

SAM

Colonel Avery, we're very sorry!

COLONEL

You mean to tell me —?

SAM

We had to do it!

COLONEL

You miscreants!

DOCTOR

(*Laughs.*)

Well, this time you ARE sick.

SAM

But, Colonel, Doctor Grant, —

(*Indicates Peter.*)

He HAD to be cured !

DOCTOR

Oh !

COLONEL

So that's it.

DIANTHA

Cured !

PETER

I am !

LIEUTENANT

Say ! What is this? An initiation?

SAM

Something of that order !

LIEUTENANT

Keith !

(*Keith salutes.*)

Bring in Smith of Alaska !

(*Keith goes to door -L-I-E- and signals.*)

SAM

(*To Phil and Thad.*)

Ssh !

(*Henry appears, sees boys, hesitates, then makes letters.*)

LIEUTENANT

(*To Sam.*)

One of your gang?

SAM

(*Nods.*)

He belongs !

HENRY

Oh, — I see !

LIEUTENANT

(*To Colonel. Shows checks and money.*)

I found these on him !

(*Fetter enters at -L-3-E-, goes to Harriet.*)

LIEUTENANT

Keith ! Hayes !

(*They salute.*)

AUNTIE

(*Comes down.*)

Oh, you're going to let these young men go — it's a misunderstanding !

COLONEL

They're in my office, Lieutenant.

LIEUTENANT

(*To patrolmen.*)

Back to your posts !

(*Patrolmen exit - U-R-C-. Sam, Philip, Thad and Henry go up, turn and bow. Hans follows Sam.*)

CHORUS

Good-night !

AUNTIE—DIANTHA—DOCTOR

Good-night !

(*They turn at door - U-R-C-, halt, look at Peter, make letters, burst into laughter and exit, Hans with them.*)

(*Peter laughs, waves them out.*)

(*Sam and others make letters as they pass window. Hans is still following Sam. Peter watches.*)

COLONEL

(*To Peter.*)

And now, you incorrigible!

AUNTIE

Oh, but he's done me a great service, Colonel Avery.

COLONEL

I can't help it. I'm ashamed of him!

PETER

Yes, sir. But don't you think you'd better take Miss Connaughton home?

COLONEL

(*Coughs.*)

Er — well —

(*To Auntie.*)

May I have the honor?

(*Offers arm.*)

AUNTIE

Thank you!

(*Takes his arm.*)

Come, Diantha!

PETER

But — I'm the hired escort!

(*Colonel and Auntie smile, go up. Fetter and Harriet follow. Auntie and Colonel turn at door.*)

COLONEL

(*To Lieutenant.*)

Thank you for your courtesy!

AUNTIE

Good-night!

LIEUTENANT

Colonel !

(*Salutes.*)

Madam !

(*Bows.*)

(*Colonel, Auntie, Fetter and Harriet exit - U-R-C-.*)

DOCTOR

(*Starts -R-. Diantha makes as if to follow. Doctor motions her to remain -L-. Shakes summons at Peter.*)

I've a notion to serve this on you !

PETER

Doctor !

(*Diantha faces window, puts baby cap to eyes.*)

DOCTOR

(*Gives Peter her hand, laughs.*)

All right ! Good-bye !

(*Nods to Lieutenant, exits - U-R-C-.*)

(*Diantha starts to follow.*)

LIEUTENANT

Oh, Miss ! Miss !

(*Diantha goes to desk, wiping eyes, crying softly. He hands her the photograph. She bursts into laugh, goes up, cap over eyes again.*)

PETER

(*Stops her.*)

Oh, don't cry ! I'd die if it'd do any good.

(*Lieutenant rises, turns his back, studies map on wall behind desk.*)

DIANTHA

(*Uncovers face.*)

I'm crying because you're NOT d— and d— !

PETER

Diantha ! May I call you that?

(*Holds out arms.*)

DIANTHA

What is your TRULY name?

PETER

My name? It's Peter !

DIANTHA

Peter !

(*They look into each other's face, embrace suddenly. Peter murmurs to her inarticulately, holding her close, his face against hers.*)

(*The figures of seven children are silhouetted upon the wide window in the rear flat. First comes The Bootblack, who is tallest, then a little girl, The Newsboy, another and shorter boy, a second girl, The Tagger, and a baby. They keep in a straight line. Their silhouettes are clear cut. Diantha sees them, her hand goes up to cover Peter's eyes; he kisses her wrist.*)

CURTAIN

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